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Liv Tyler and the domain names they're all after

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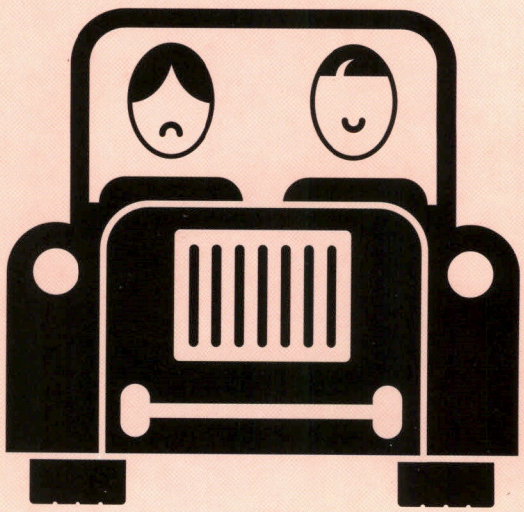

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ESSENTIALS

ABOUT US»

We're sworn to saving you time and money by bringing you the best of the Internet every month – and giving technical advice that will make mastering the Net cheaper and easier.

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LIVE 2001»

the net staff will be on hand at Live 2001, the UK's biggest consumer electronics show, at Birmingham NEC on 21-23 Sep. See page 26 for more details or call 0870 902 0444 for tickets.

NEED HELP?»

Got a technical query? Call *the net* helpline on 020 8267 5933 between 2pm and 5pm each Thursday for one-on-one advice, or email ***thenetnow@haynet.com***.

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COVER PICS: PAMELA HANSON/OUTLINE, WHAT CAR?

:-) ED'S COMMENT

Time to start surfing instead of hanging on the telephone

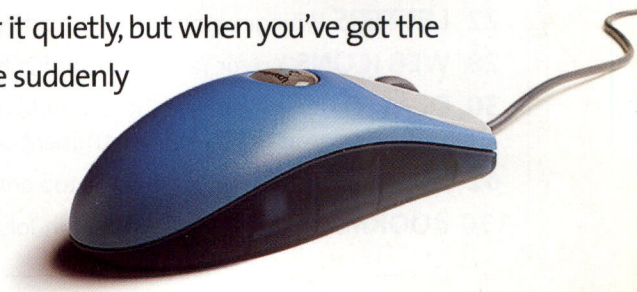
People power is a wonderful thing. Alright, so you wouldn't think so after tuning in to *Watchdog* – and the old adage that a million record buyers can't be wrong doesn't come near to explaining SClub7's continuing existence – but in the real world, when people get together good things generally happen.

The wired world's very own Berlin Wall, the aching divide between surfers' expectations and the service provided by those in charge of connections, is finally starting to crumble as a direct result of public intervention. While we all moan about slow-loading pages or constant busy signals, they're often the fault of greater powers than your ISP; where the providers can do far better, however, is in good old-fashioned customer service.

Anyone who's ever had to dial up an ISP helpline (and, let's face it, even Gatesy and co suffer the odd technical malfunction) almost certainly has a tale of woe to tell: unanswered phones, unhelpful or inaccurate answers, extortionate charges of up to £1 a minute.

The sands, however, are shifting: thanks to the formation of ISP user pressure groups and a greater awareness of the sheer range of alternative services out there, consumers are voting with their modems and switching ISPs at the drop of a hat. Now it's up to *them* to keep *us* happy, which is why we've road-tested the customer service of every major provider out there on page 98 to help you choose a helpline that really is helpful.

And just to keep the big boys on their toes even more, our A-Z guide from page 34 answers the most commonly-asked helpline questions for you. Whisper it quietly, but when you've got the answers in front of you, life suddenly becomes very easy...



Robert Jeffery, **EDITOR**
robert.jeffery@haynet.com

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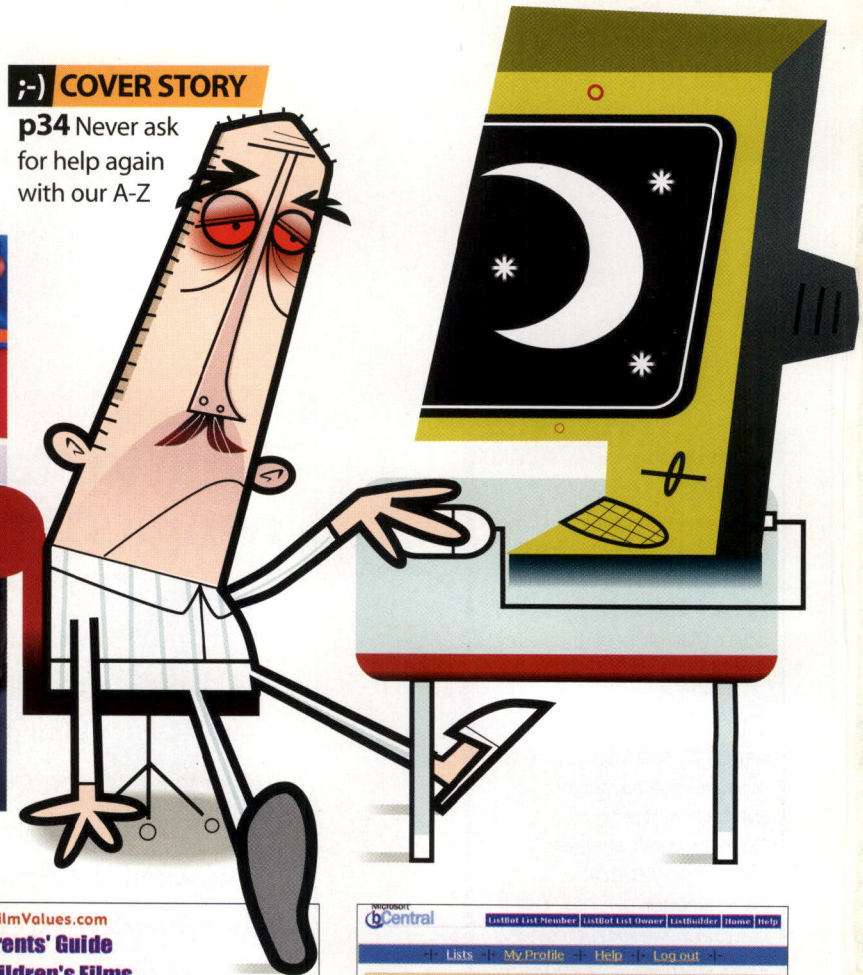
;-) COVER STORY

p34 Never ask for help again with our A-Z



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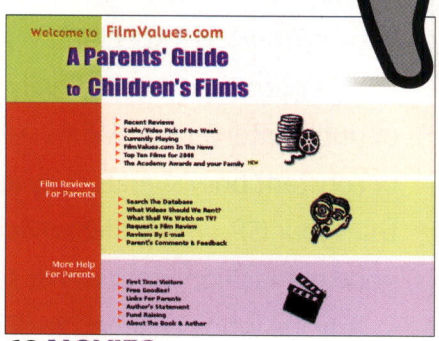

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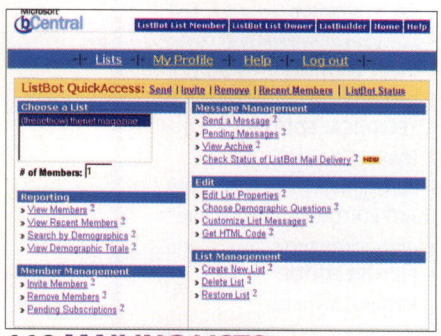

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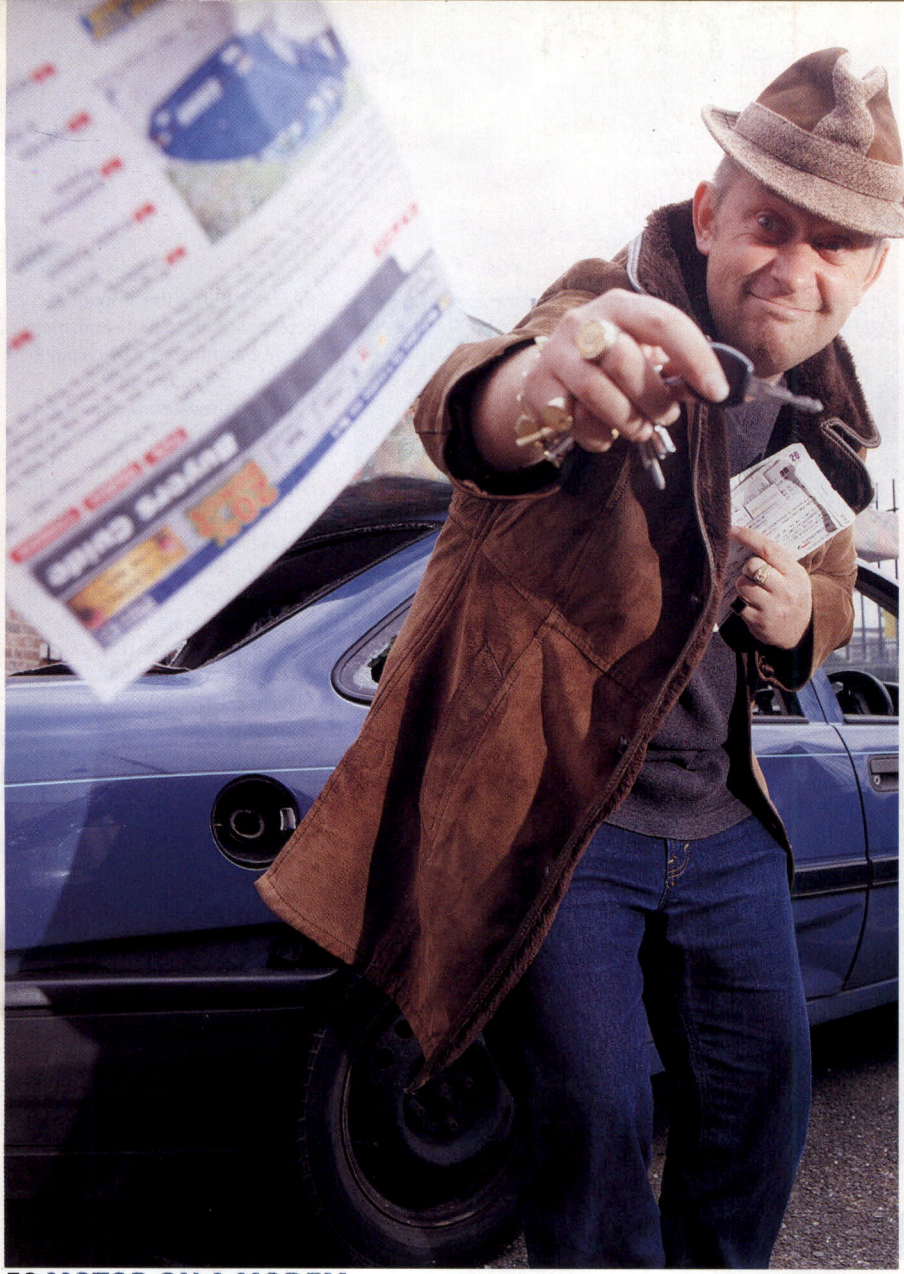
Every move you make on the Net is being watched by someone. Who are they and how do you stop them?

PICTURES: RICHARD LAWRENCE, DAVID SEMPLE, STEVE ORINO, CORBIS



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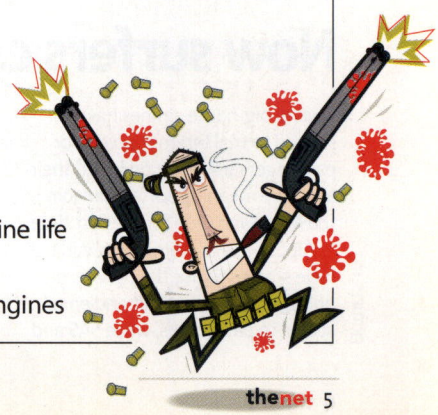
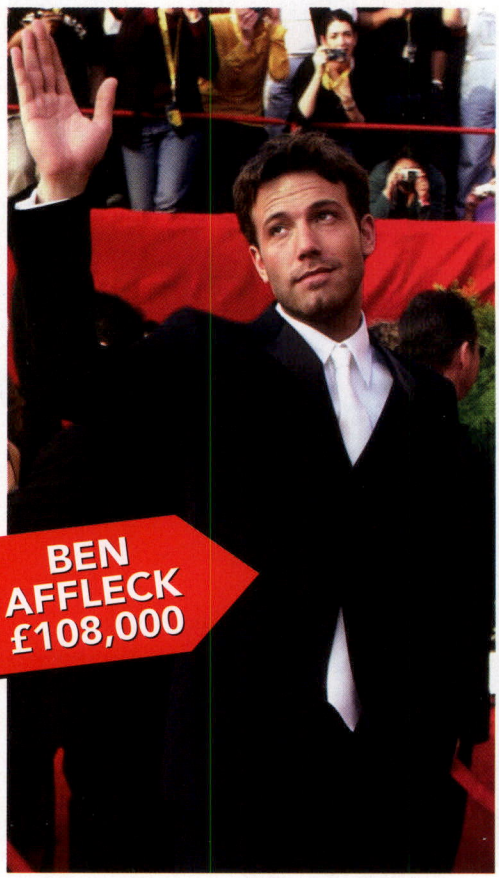
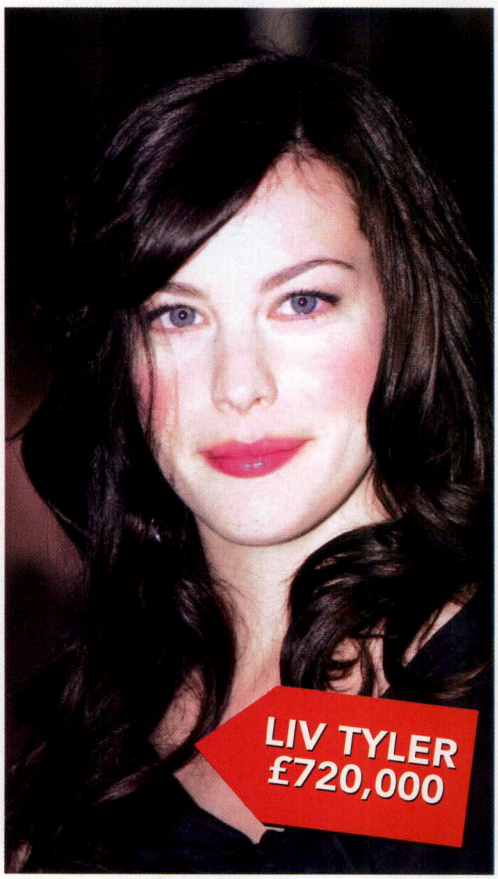






Celebrity names still for sale in domain free-for-all

INVESTIGATION **Stars' URLs can fetch millions – and they cost as little as £35**

Celebrity domain names worth millions of pounds are still available for as little as £35, *the net* research has discovered.

Despite massive publicity surrounding 'cybersquatting' – in which speculators buy the rights to a star's URL and then sell it back to them at a vastly inflated price – a random survey of famous faces reveals many still haven't bothered to register their names online. The practice of buying someone else's domain – and then effectively trying to blackmail them by offering it for sale – should be of concern to many big stars. The practice is seen as unacceptable by many, including the UN's World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) which presides over domain name disputes and which frequently awards domains back to their rightful user.

The list of stars who haven't registered their domains includes some of the biggest names going. These include actress Catherine Zeta-Jones and *Pearl Harbor* star Kate Beckinsale, now a hot property on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as a variety of British presenters and soap stars. In theory, opportunists could register the domains and ask for huge prices to hand them over – and the stakes are certainly high. Conservative estimates of domain values (based on the amount of potential traffic to a site and any future e-commerce activity) put a premium celeb domain like Madonna's ***www.madonna.com*** at a whopping $2 million (around £1.4 million), although the Material Girl has now won back the rights to her name after taking cybersquatter Dan Parisi to court.

Tennis pin-up Anna Kournikova's domain weighs in at a hefty $1 million (£720,000), actor Ben Affleck commands $150,000 (£108,000) and even a B-list star like Vinnie Jones is worth around $50,000 (£36,000).

The introduction of new .tv domains means stars have a whole new set of registrations to go through if they want to hang on to their rights – the domain is particularly attractive to television or film celebs who might want to stream video from a site in the future. To demonstrate how easy it is to occupy a domain, we bought the rights to starlet Liv Tyler's ***www.livtyler.tv*** domain from ***www.easily.co.uk*** in under 10 minutes for a cost of just £35 for a year's ownership – the domain is worth around $500,000 (£360,000), which would roughly double for a .com. In theory, we are free to use the domain as we see fit, though we are surrendering the rights back to Ms Tyler for free.

The WIPO frequently hands domain names back to celebrities

The law surrounding domain rights is still a developing area – while Madonna booted out her cybersquatter with relatively little difficulty, Bruce Springsteen failed to gain ownership of ***brucespringsteen.com*** because its resident was running a successful fan site for The Boss. Generally, WIPO will remove domains from anyone it believes

Now surfers can join the Mile-High Club

Several big-name airlines have started to trial Internet access for passengers travelling on board their aircraft – meaning surfers can join the Mile-High Club for the first time.

Air Canada and Singapore Airlines have started to use the new technology to bring Internet and email access to passengers, while SAS and Virgin are the first European customers to sign up.

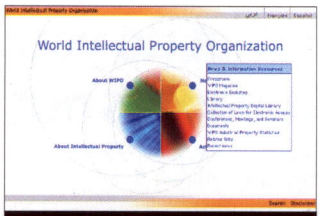
Email friends from 30,000 feet

Users will need to have their own laptop, but the service will use their current email client such as Outlook or Eudora. The system works through an on board network connected to a server which sends and receives 'batches' of email via a satellite link every 5-15 minutes.

The technology has been pioneered by Tenzing (***www.tenzing.com***) and although users won't be able to gain full Web access, they will be able to see content from 50 of the world's leading sites including FT.com and Yahoo!.

The service works by monthly subscription, so travellers will have to join Tenzing's ISP to send email through an account.

PICTURES: PA



WIPO: returns domains to owners

has bought them for personal gain: the huge traffic and earning potential in celebrity domains makes them attractive to entrepreneurs out for a quick buck. Yet while pundits and the public applauded the cheeky efforts of early cybersquatters, they are now regarded as a nuisance by surfers.

Legitimate domain registration is a growing area of cyberspace: almost three million .co.uk URLs are currently registered, with 35 million registered URLs in total worldwide. Cheap domains with no hosting are available from sites such as UK2 (***www.uk2.net***) and 123Reg (***www.123reg.co.uk***). Sites like these are perfect if you've built a site on a free Web server such as ***www.geocities.com*** or ***www.freeservers.com***. Sources of free Web space like these sites or your ISP provide long URLs as standard, but buying a cheap domain as a front page which redirects to your free space can solve this. Domains ending in .com can be anything from £8-£10 per year upwards but UK based domains such as .co.uk are becoming cheaper and cheaper, so shop around to find a decent deal.

Make sure you read the small print, too, especially how long you are registering the domain for – if the site requires you to register for two years, remember that the amount charged to your credit card will be doubled. You can also buy domain names with Web space included in the package from sites such as ***www.easily.co.uk*** or ***www.easyspace.co.uk*** for upwards of £20 per year, or redirect an existing Web-built site to a new URL.

HOW MUCH IS A STAR'S DOMAIN WORTH?

Estimated values of celebrity

ARTIST	URL	PRICE
Madonna	*www.madonna.com*	£1.4 million
Anna Kournikova	*www.annakournikova.com*	£720,000
Johnny Depp	*www.johnnydepp.com*	£720,000
Liv Tyler	*www.livtyler.com*	£720,000
Ben Affleck	*www.benaffleck.com*	£108,000
Kate Beckinsale	*www.katebeckinsale.com*	£50,000
Vinnie Jones	*www.vinniejones.com*	£36,000

Stressed by the Web?

the net helpline is available for all software, hardware, ISP and technical enquiries. Lines are open on Thursdays from 2pm to 5pm.

0208 267 5933

or email thenetnow@haynet.com

NEWS IN BRIEF

FIRST BYTES»

› SNOW WHITE STILL A KILLER

The scourge of email boxes worldwide, the Snow White virus, is still on the rise according to anti-virus experts TrendMicro (*www.trendmicro.com*). The company says this is due to a new variant that, while non-destructive, could still bring down company email servers due to its tendency to reproduce quickly. The virus first appeared late last year as an email labelled Snow White And The Seven Dwarves which encorages users to open an attachment leading them to pornographic sites. Another virus is also on the rise, spreading with the promise of Miss World pictures. The worm virus encourages users to open up a file called 'myworld.exe'.which tries to wipe several Windows system files and reproduces by sending itself to 50 people in the recipient's address book.

› GET *THE NET* IN YOUR EMAIL

This very magazine now has its own email list giving advance warning of the best new sites and a round-up of Web-related news – and anyone can join. To sign up, simply visit ***thenetnow.listbot.com***, type in your email address and sign up. See p.118 for more – and expect something in your Inbox soon.

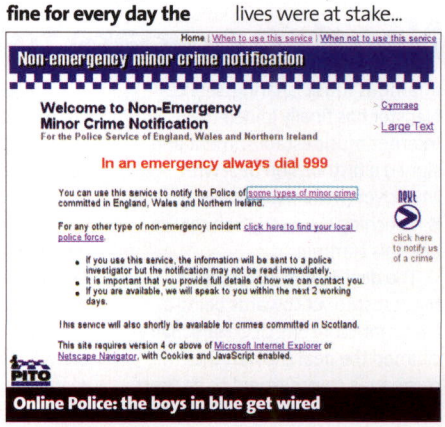
› YAHOO! IN COURT ROW

The recent French court case banning access to Yahoo! auctions of Nazi memorabilia is causing a legal headache for Internet watchers: can a judge in one country rule over what can be viewed on a site run from abroad? A US judge is currently exploring the legal issues with a view to providing a possible landmark ruling on the area. Yahoo! questioned the implications on American freedom of speech laws by foreign rulings. Yahoo! was previously sued by French civil rights organisations and was faced with a £9,000 fine for every day the offending auction remained accessible within French borders. In the end, Yahoo! removed the content from all its sites worldwide as it could not technically restrict only French users.

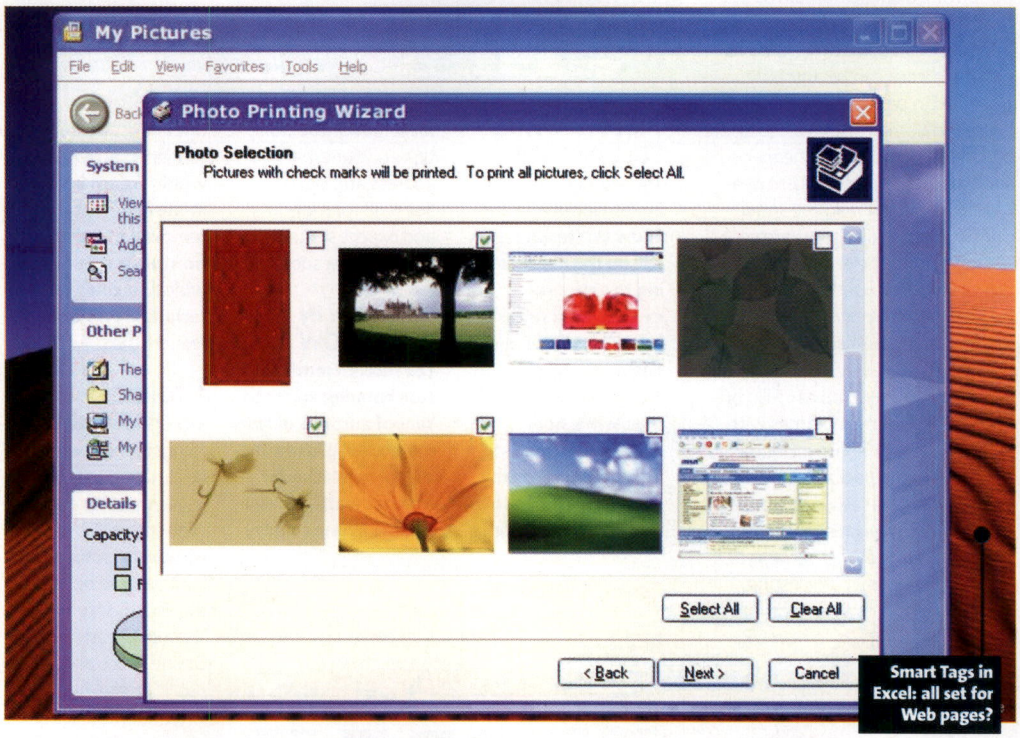
Yahoo! Auctions: source of the offending items

› COPS GET WITH THE NET

Minor crimes can now be reported to the police through a new Web site at ***www.online.police.uk***, a joint venture between the Police's Internet Technology arm and BT. Online Police allows the public to give basic details of offences to be logged or acted on by their local station. Sussex Police was the first force to join in the scheme and now receives around 100 emails per day, although this pales when compared to the 3,000 emergency calls made to its call centres. Currently, you can only report theft, criminal damage, theft from a motor vehicle or damage to a motor vehicle. It's not known whether the Home Office intends to replace 999 with an email equivalent – though it might force service providers to speed up connections if they believed lives were at stake...


Non-emergency minor crime notification
Welcome to Non-Emergency
Minor Crime Notification
For the Police Service of England, Wales and Northern Ireland
In an emergency always dial 999

Online Police: the boys in blue get wired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Smart Tags in Excel: all set for Web pages?

Web page text to get 'smart tags'

Will new Explorer get OfficeXP's infamous text tags?

Rumours abound that Microsoft has built its 'Smart Tags', the hotly-debated OfficeXP feature, into the next release of Internet Explorer, its market-leading browser.

If the move proves a runner (and we'll know with the launch of WindowsXP this autumn), Web page text viewed through IE will suddenly gain a life of its own.

The Wall Street Journal discovered in a test version of XP that Microsoft may have set the browser to identify words on a Web page and, through a linked menu, offer relevant products and services. So, for example, if you were to search for 'free email' in any search engine, or it appears on any Web page, the word will be underlined in purple, much like a grammatical mistake in Word is currently underlined in green. Any movement of the mouse over the words could potentially bring up an icon with a connected menu containing 'Sign up for a free Hotmail account'.

See ***www.microsoft.com/windowsxp*** for more information.

These 'Smart tags' are already included in the recently-released Office XP. Any name or address you type in Word has a menu that links to the details of the contact in your Outlook address book. Smart tags also allow any table copied from the Internet in Excel or Power Point to be auto updated via the Web.

The company says that it will provide free HTML code that site owners can implement in their pages to prevent Smart Tags appearing on their sites. It will also provide an add-on for the browser allowing companies to create their own Tags.

In the brave new world of Office XP, the tags are one of the best features. But rolling Smart Tags onto the Web may be seen by cynics as another step in Microsoft's plan for domination of the Internet.

What do you mean 'it's not a watch'?

If you never could resist novelty, then the odds are you'll fall head over heels with Panasonic's new MP3 player. That it offers two hours of playback time is nothing special, we know. But it does have one truly unique feature – you can wear this MP3 player on your wrist.

The new machine is the first in what Panasonic promises will be a whole range of wearable hi-tech products, dubbed 'e-wear'.

This first outing is small and reasonably lightweight, so the self-conscious among you can hide it in your shirt pocket. For the more brazen, there's the option of a fairly adequate necklace device or a watch strap complete with holder. Sadly, the strap appears to have been made in some kind of 1980s second-hand toy hell.

The price for this wearable Internet jukebox? Expect to pay around £300. That done, you can set about filling the unit's 64Mb flash card memory. See more details at ***www.panasonic-europe.com/ewear***.

Is that an MP3 player you're wearing?

Napster: prepare to pay...

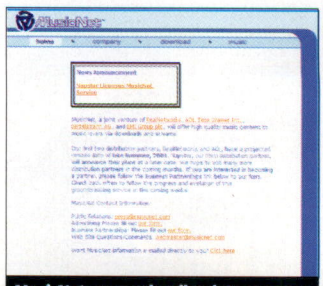
Infamous music 'sharing' service Napster has finally joined the Internet music establishment and signed a distribution deal with MusicNet (***www.musicnet.com***), which is launching a subscription service late this summer.

The deal is seen as Napster's biggest step yet towards being a legitimate concern. CEO Hank Barry claimed the deal showed the company's commitment to its users, who he labelled 'the world's most enthusiastic music fans'.

Napster is still reeling from the last injunction it was served, and is still trying to rid its service of all copyrighted material.

MusicNet is to use technology from audio specialists RealNetworks (***www.real.com***) to provide sound to its users. The record labels behind the alliance are AOL Time Warner, EMI and Bertelsmann, which already owns a stake in Napster. Bertelsmann also recently announced that it has acquired the US music company ***www.myplay.com***. As well as Napster, it owns a stake in music retailer CDNow (***www.cdnow.com***).

Napster itself is to become the third distribution partner for Music Net after AOL and RealNetworks. New Napster registrants will be able to share content from MusicNet with other subscribers. The file-sharing service has already said it hopes to launch a new version of its service in the near future that will ensure artists and labels are paid.


MusicNet: goes subscriber late summer

MusicNet was launched in April and is intended to be a secure way for labels to distribute their music online while ensuring they are still paid royalties for plays or sales.

Sony and Vivendi Universal have also announced their intention to create a similar service to MusicNet.

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:// All that's happening online

Alexander: Web guru

Blair unveils new Internet supremo in reshuffle

Among the less widely heralded appointments in the Government reshuffle following Labour's re-election was former backbencher Douglas Alexander as 'e-minister', and the newshounds at The Register (***www.theregister.co.uk***) were quick to react to the news. Within hours, they claimed that Tony Blair had, in fact, intended to appoint Wendy Alexander, Douglas's sister. Wendy, the e-minister for the Scottish Parliament, has a good track record in making Scotland one of the most Web-savvy areas of the UK.

The net sent Douglas Alexander an email. Sadly for him and us, he didn't reply. And no wonder – he didn't appear to have an email address at the House of Commons Web site. A quick search revealed that he has his own Web site at ***www.dalexandermp.demon.co.uk***, but when we looked it had not been updated after the successful General Election campaign and his new appointment. We also tried to contact his office but were told he wasn't currently available.

Alexander replaces Patricia Hewitt as e-minister and has lots to do – Labour's e-strategy has never been under more criticism. It is thought that his remit will differ slightly from his predecessor's, with particular responsibility for 'e-business and competitiveness' – Whitehall has recently been condemned for not knowing the difference between e-business and e-commerce. Alexander will be the main force behind Labour's push to have all Government services online by 2005. We get the feeling he'll be a busy boy for the next few months...

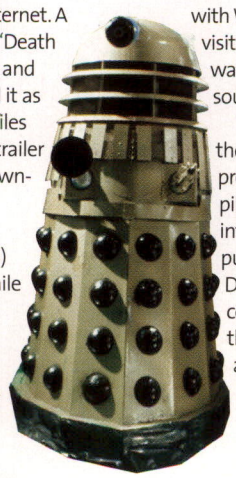
Who reincarnates on Web

Twelve years after Sylvester McCoy starred in the last BBC1 *Dr Who* series, he returns as the famous timelord through the Internet. A half-hour episode called 'Death Comes To Time' is online and Who fans can download it as six separate Real Audio files from 13 July, although a trailer has been available to download since 15 June.

McCoy's sidekick Ace (played by Sophie Aldred) returns to assist him, while Stephen Fry and John Sessions also star.

The BBC has given users the opportunity to say if they want the cult classic to return to our screens – vote at ***www.bbc.co.uk/cult/doctorwho***. Whatever the BBC decides to do with Who, the site is worth a visit for its screensavers and wallpaper to download plus sound and audio clips.

'Death Comes To Time' is the BBC's first online drama production, although the pilot programme was intended for Radio 4 and put together by producer Dan Freedman. Radio 4's commissioners decided that sci-fi didn't suit its audience. Freedman hopes to make more episodes in the future.



PICTURES: PA, BBC

KNOWHOW THE INSTANT EXPERT GUIDE

No.25: iTV

Don't you mean ITV, Britain's esteemed first commercial terrestrial network, home of *Coronation Street* and that nice man who says 'is that your final answer'?

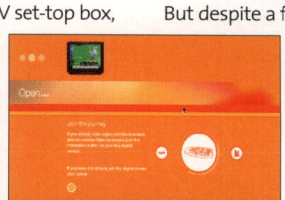
No, it's interactive TV – shopping, films on demand, Web access. Sky established its Open interactive TV service (***www.open-here.co.uk***) back in 1996. It brings interactive services through your digital TV set-top box, which plugs into your phone line. Sky digiboxes are set up for it.

But Open only allows you to shop from selected services and send email. I want to surf the Web while the adverts are on.

Aside from the features already available though Open and ONdigital's ONnet, you might have to wait a bit. American telecom giant AT&T has scaled back its plans to develop a full-blown set-top box for televisions across America. It would have offered digital TV and high-speed Net access to cable customers. It now plans to launch a less complex service, much to the dismay of our friends at Microsoft.

What's it got to do Bill's brigade?

Microsoft had invested $5 billion in AT&T as it wanted to develop the software for the boxes – as many as 10 million were due to be launched.



Open: on the Sky Digital service

AT&T believes people aren't ready for complex services through their TV. The set-top boxes were to supply digital TV and high-speed Internet access to cabled homes.

So it's a dumbing down, then?

Yes. At least Sky's Open offers shopping. The new AT&T service only has a digital programme guide, video-on-demand, Favourites and email. But despite a fairly slow uptake in the US, it'll be big elsewhere – Bill has managed to get iTV off the ground in Portugal, with set-top boxes running Microsoft TV software.

Not only have they got the sun, but they've got ITV2.

You mean 'iTV, too'. Portuguese punters can take advantage of digital video recording and home shopping as well as Internet access and email. Mark Le Goy, European marketing director for Microsoft TV, says it opens up a new revenue stream for Microsoft. According to Ovum Consulting 357 million households will be able to receive iTV by 2006 compared to just 62 million now.

But surely most people who want to use the Internet at home have already bought a PC, anyway?

Well, you could always look up info on the characters in *EastEnders*...

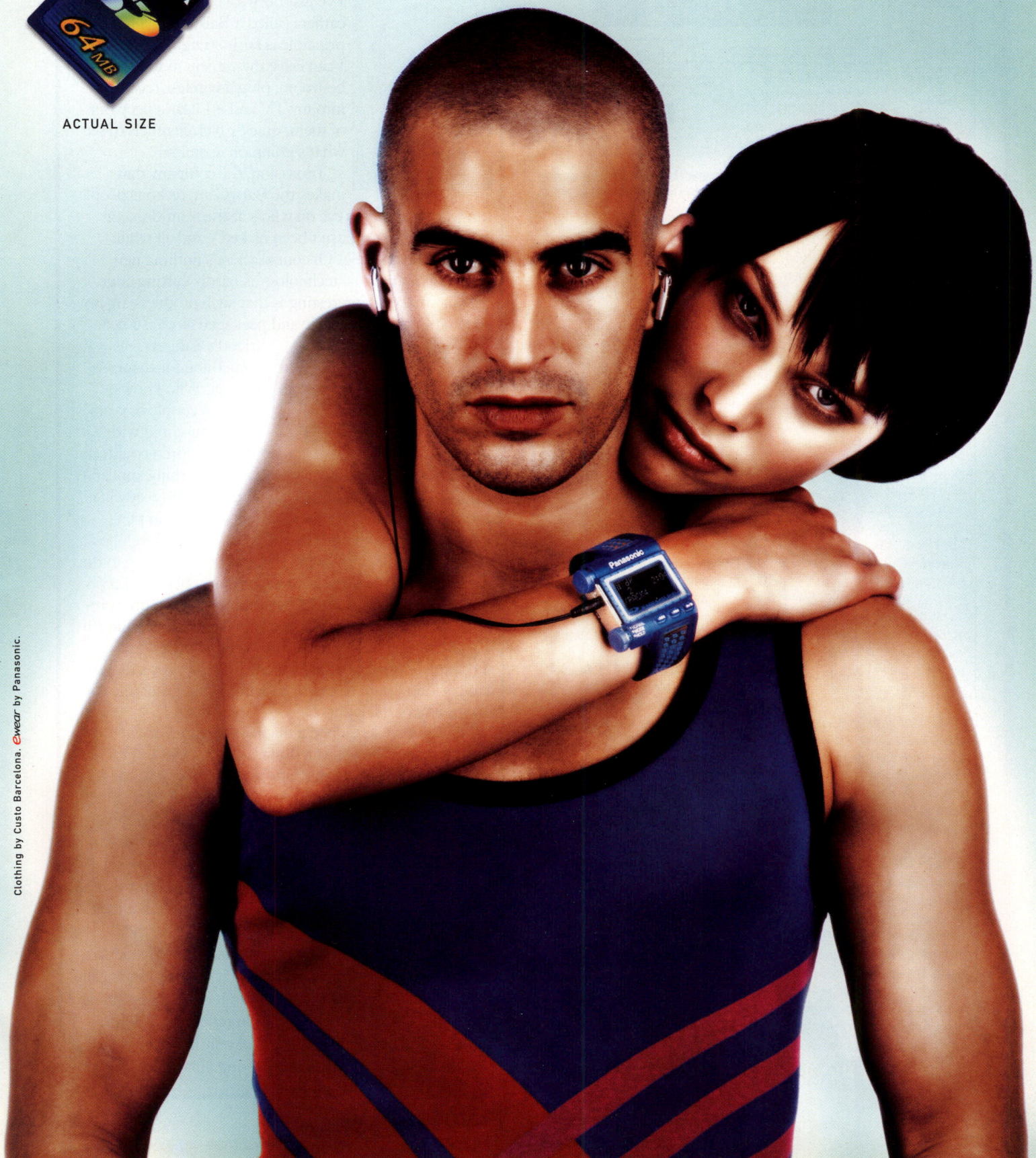
FEEL NAKED WITHOUT YOUR MUSIC? Don't. The new Panasonic e.wear digital music player is so small and light you can wear it anywhere. e.wear uses Panasonic's 64mb SD memory card which is no bigger than a postage stamp but still capable of holding 2 hours of music. Download MP3s from the web. Transfer tracks from your favourite CDs using your PC. Check www.panasonic.co.uk to find out more and to win e.wear. It's as simple as that. YOU'RE DRESSED.

PUT SOME MUSIC ON

Panasonic

The *e.wear* digital music player from Panasonic

ACTUAL SIZE

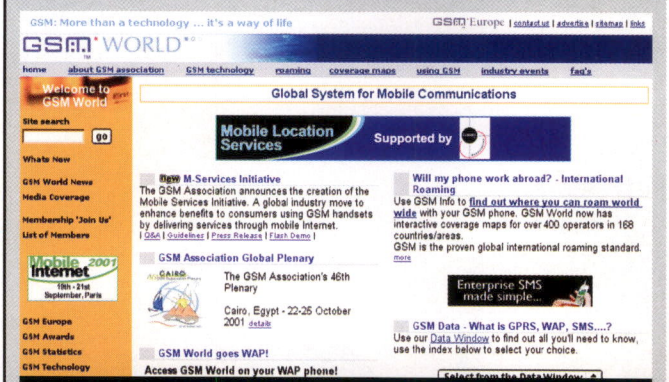


Clothing by Custo Barcelona. *e.wear* by Panasonic.

thenetnow»

:// All that's happening online

WIRELESS WORLD»


GSM: More than a technology ... it's a way of life
GSM WORLD
Global System for Mobile Communications
Mobile Location Services
Supported by
New M-Services Initiative
Will my phone work abroad? - International Roaming
GSM Association Global Plenary
The GSM Association's 46th Plenary
Cairo, Egypt - 22-25 October 2001
Enterprise SMS made simple...
GSM Data - What is GPRS, WAP, SMS....?
GSM World goes WAP!
Access GSM World on your WAP phone!

The GSM Association: big fans of the wireless Internet and first stop for news

A new standard for 3G

The GSM association (***www.gsmworld.com***) has launched what it calls 'M-services' for 3G mobile phones. M-services will allow phones to be sent more complex applications such as games. All the major phone manufacturers have signed up to the new 'standard' which establishes a medium for all services.

The standard is similar to current Nokia phones with their ability to send and download screensavers, ringtones and graphics. The only note of caution is that developers of the new systems will need to ensure that networks are able to support the new services they want to offer.

The GSM Association's Web site calls it 'a global industry move to enhance benefits to consumers using GSM handsets by delivering services through mobile Internet.'

WAP: things are looking down

BT POOLS RESOURCES TO REDUCE 3G COSTS

Cash-strapped BT has joined forces with Deutsche Telekom to cut costs in developing the next generation of 3G mobile networks. The two companies' mobile phone arms, BT Wireless and T-Mobile, are to help each other develop networks in the UK and Germany respectively.

The deal will allow easier roaming within the two countries as networks are upgraded. The companies will be able to expand the upgrade programme more quickly and will not need as many new masts and base stations. BT estimates this will save it upwards of 20 percent of predicted 3G start-up costs over the next 10 years.

OFF WITH A WAP

WAP portal WAPit (***www.wapit.com***) has failed to gain the extra finance it needed to survive. The Finnish company, established in 1998, has now declared itself bankrupt. The declaration on the front of its Web site now rings hollow; 'WAPit believes in a mobile driven future and is dedicated to lead the new generation of simple, time and place independent mobile communication.'

The company developed technology for its customers to use in their own applications. Unsurprisingly and perhaps accurately it blames the collapse in the WAP market for its closure.

PALM OFF

Palm has unveiled a card so its users can wirelessly connect to communication devices such as mobile phones via Bluetooth technology. The postage stamp-sized card was developed in tandem with technology giant Toshiba and will allow m500 and m505 handhelds to communicated via short-range radio waves. It will cost just over £100.

Tim Richardson

OPINION NO-NO GADGETS

I've just been given a wireless video camera called a BabyCam. The principle is fairly straightforward. I can leave the camera in the kids' bedroom, plug a wireless receiver into my TV and if I hear a peep out of them, quickly flick channels to see what's going on upstairs.

Traxvision, the company that makes the BabyCam, reckons people can use it to keep an eye on who's at the front door, or ensure that the car hasn't been nicked – and all while they're watching telly. Of course, there's nothing new about all of this. The technology is hardly cutting edge.

What makes it interesting is that such products are now becoming more affordable and packaged as consumer-friendly gadgets – as something for the mass market. Who knows, within a couple of years every household with young children could have something similar operating discreetly in a corner. It's just the way these things seem to happen.

A fridge is no longer a place to keep your food cool...

But where will it end? LG Electronics has developed a range of consumer products that can be hooked up to the Net. A fridge, it seems, is no longer just a place to keep your food cool. Now, it is a communications centre complete with a video screen that can be used for watching TV, listening to music, checking and updating your shopping list and emailing friends. It's even got a digital camera – no doubt to catch students stealing sausages in the middle of the night.

LG has also developed a microwave oven with a built-in modem so you can download recipes. And its Web-enabled washing machine can also log on to the Internet – no doubt in a bid to end washday blues.

And then there's the Spy-Cye robot from US outfit Probotics. This Webcam on wheels costs $1000 and can be manoeuvred remotely around the home or work via a PC and a Web connection. But it gets worse. Last year an inventor in Thailand took this Web-operated robot idea and went and fitted one with a gun. Sensors on the machine track movement and heat. And if an intruder is detected, the machine can either shoot them automatically or wait for an instruction to fire from its owner (assuming it's not them moving, of course). On reflection, I think I'll stick with my BabyCam. Now if only it would change nappies, settle arguments, sing lullabies...

REG. TM.
CK
IMPORTED
BRAUEREI BECK & CO
REG. TM.
BECK'S
BIER · BEER
BREMEN 1874 · PHILADELPHIA 1876
BREMEN · GERMANY

Statattack»

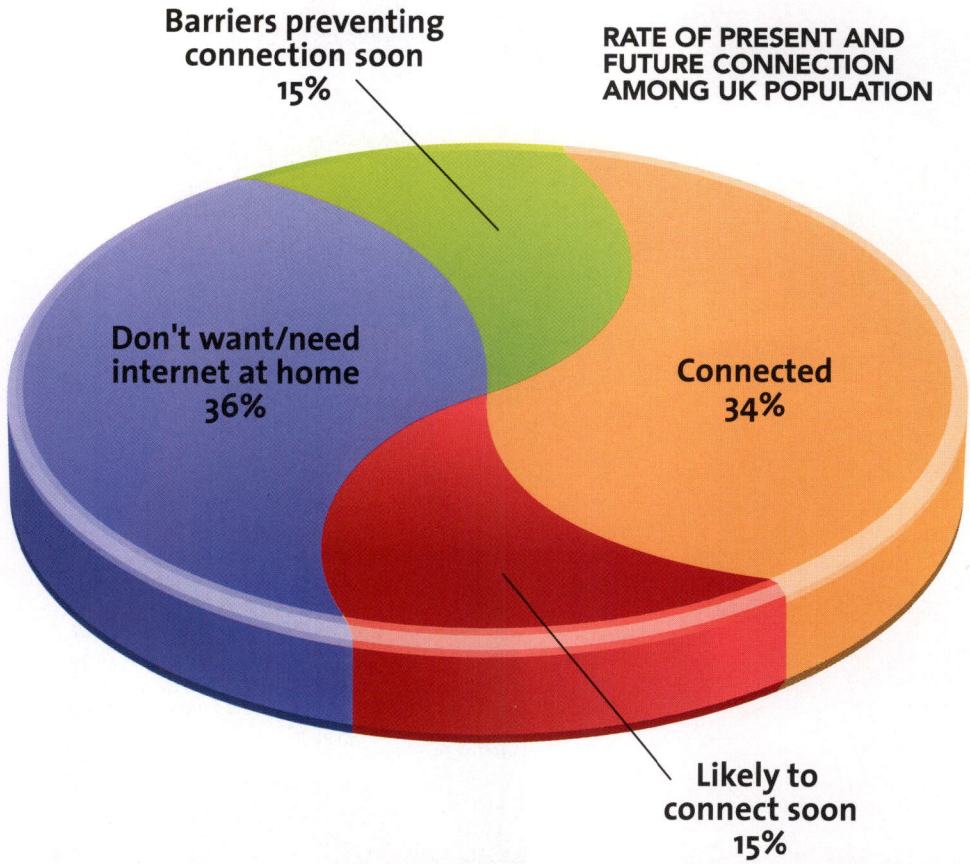
:// The Web in charts and graphs

Why everyone wants to get wired soon...

Up to 66 percent of the British population could own a home Internet connection soon, according to an official report from Oftel (***www.oftel.gov.uk***), the telecommunications industry watchdog.

A survey of a cross-section of UK residents has revealed that 34 percent of us are presently wired, a million more than six months ago, but plenty more have a strong interest in a home connection. A further 15 percent plan to sign up soon, with 15 percent keen on the idea but held back by various factors, including connection speed and cost of PCs and dial-ups. The rise of both broadband and unmetered access should help sway such consumers in the future.

In all, 8.5 million homes are now online, and the report found an increasing number of younger surfers are using mobile phones and digital TV, although only one per cent of those surveyed were ADSL-enabled. And the other 36 percent not online? They just don't want the Web, apparently – which means more space for the rest of us...


RATE OF PRESENT AND FUTURE CONNECTION AMONG UK POPULATION
Barriers preventing connection soon 15%
Don't want/need internet at home 36%
Connected 34%
Likely to connect soon 15%

ILLUSTRATIONS: PETER LIDDIARD

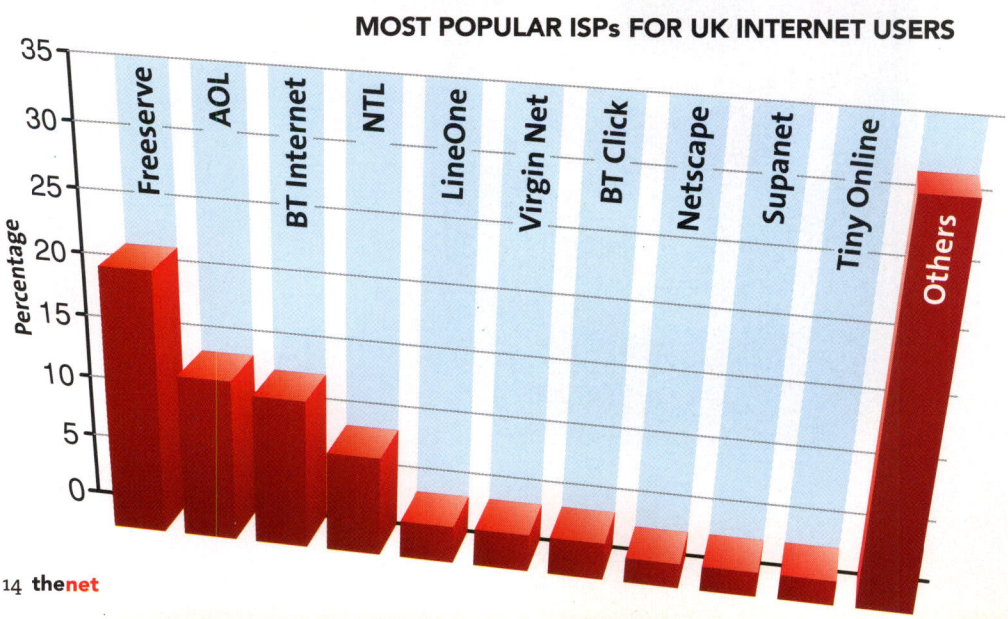
...but none of us want to pay for the privilege

ISPs who offer unmetered access are enjoying the greatest growth in customers – and consumers are increasingly willing to shop around for the best deal.

Oftel found a greater spread of ISPs than ever before in its latest research, with customers increasingly switching from paying for calls to fully unmetered packages, which now accounts for 18 percent of all connections.

Freeserve remains Britain's biggest ISP, with a 21 percent share of the market, ahead of AOL (13 per cent) and BT Internet (12 percent).

Of the top 10, only cable provider NTL has seen a growth in market share, suggesting that smaller ISPs are picking up customers based on their attractive pricing and customer service. For the lowdown on the country's top 50 ISPs, see our test on page 110.



QUICK FIGURES

YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE IT...»

- Women now account for 40 percent of UK Internet users – and they could be in the majority within a couple of years, according to Forrester Research. The fairer sex already makes up 51 percent of surfers Stateside. Meanwhile, University of Washington researchers claim it's easy to discern sex from reading an email, as men 'shut down dialogue' while women ask probing questions and seek opinion.
- **The total number of surfers has grown to 429 million people, according to Nielsen/Net Rating figures. North America accounts for 41 percent of the total.**
- Brits have 40 percent fewer nights out than they did two years ago, say Telewest – and it's all the Internet's fault. Apparently, we'd all rather surf or watch telly than be down the pub or eating out...

TIGHT-FISTED

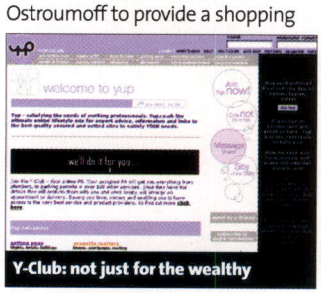
Taking care of the simple things

THE Y CLUB ***www.y-club.com*** Y will organise your life so you can go out and do something less boring instead

Modern life is rubbish. If you're not working, you're dealing with your bank, sorting out your car, arranging that surprise party or sorting out a holiday. All of which leaves little time for relaxation or, indeed, the finer things in life.

Employing someone else to take away the mundane tasks we all find so mind-numbing and time-consuming has never been an option for the average Briton – butlers and personal assistants, after all, are the exclusive preserve of the super-rich and cost too much for the average pocket. Enter stage left The Y-Club, 'your online PA', which aims to take everyday tasks out of your everyday routine without hitting your pocket.

Formed in January, The Y-Club is a spin-off from Yup (***www.yup.co.uk***), founded two years ago by James Fry, a former IT expert, and Charles Ostroumoff to provide a shopping directory of top-notch services for the busy professional. 'We knew what people wanted from setting up Yup,' says Fry, 'so we decided to create a more personalised service.'



Y-Club: not just for the wealthy

Y-Club's James Fry: free time is money

On paying a £25 monthly subscription, a Y-Club member is assigned a personal assistant who will cater for their every need – from arranging a babysitter or booking a restaurant to finding a plumber or booking a garage. The assistants use their database of providers to negotiate the service before collecting payment from the member –and by communicating through your inbox, you don't need to pick up the phone.

'It's for professional people who are working nine or 10 hours a day but have responsibilities in personal or family life to meet,' explains Fry. 'They know what they want and they use us as a way to get it.' Presently available only in London, Yup hopes to extend the service nationwide and are negotiating with businesses and celebrity agencies to bring in new clients. The motivation, says Fry, is simple: 'We simply can't afford to let our members down.'

Get something good for tea

FOOD 40 ***www.food4o.com*** Cut out the middleman by sourcing your groceries direct

Wild boar sausages, regional cheeses, traditionally brewed beer: speciality foods like these can be found in all the major supermarkets. But what you see on the shelves is only half the story: the mark-up to the consumer is steep and the deal offered to producers frequently a raw one. Aware that the supermarkets seemed to be taking everyone for a ride, Adrian Bicker and John Pullen created Food 40 (a trendy spelling of Food for Tea) to provide specialist producers and retailers with an alternative way to find customers and retailers.

'Small food producers split into two camps,' explains Bicker. 'Those that are desperate to try and sell their products through the supermarkets, and those that already are and wish they never had. What we're doing is like a third way'.

Adrian Bicker: a helping hand for the little guy

Should they wish to support specifically local producers, shoppers can search the producers and retailers on the site by region. But they can can also search by product type (like cakes and pastries, pickles and chutneys, fresh pasta, beers and venison), then fill and pay for a single basket.

Ironically, this provides customers with the convenience of the very supermarkets whose bluff Food4o is calling. The main difference, however, is that the producers and retailers retain full control over their products and their pricing.

'It's a bit like going to a farmer's market, where you can walk around the different stalls and see all the goods,' says Bicker. And like a farmer's market, shoppers can access information about each of the producers or retailers featured.

The 'fine food and drink' available through Food4o isn't necessarily organic or GM-free, though shoppers have the option to search only for these or for foods guaranteed, for example, to be vegetarian or nut-free. Its quality has more to do with the attitude of the people who make and sell it, says Bicker.

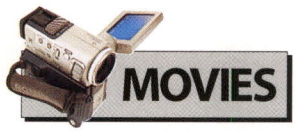
'What we're really interested in is the small producers that really believe in what they're producing and really make an effort to do a good job.' A dot com with a conscience? Hold the front page...

WORDS: ALEX NEWBY (FOOD 40), ROBERT JEFFERY (Y-CLUB); PICTURES: RICHARD LAWRENCE

paranoid

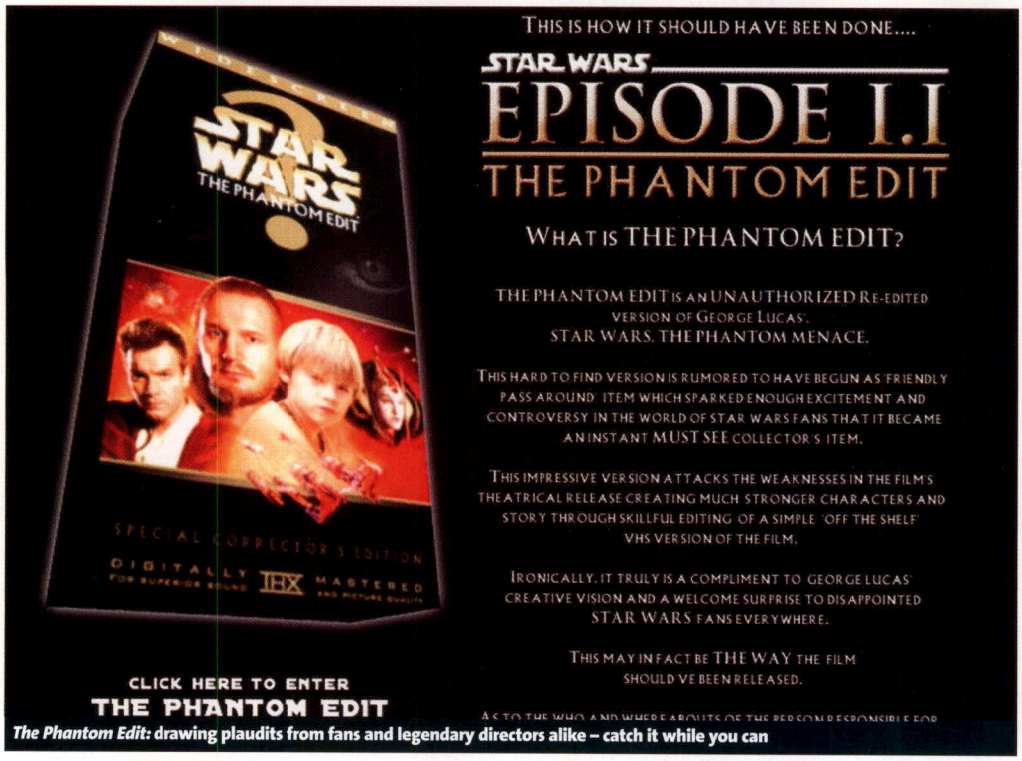
siteinsider»

:// Whispers from the worlds of music, movies and games



May the Web be with you

Why is George Lucas praising a fan who's posted a remake of his latest flick online for the world to see? And where will it end?


THIS IS HOW IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE....
STAR WARS
EPISODE I.I
THE PHANTOM EDIT
WHAT IS THE PHANTOM EDIT?
THE PHANTOM EDIT IS AN UNAUTHORIZED RE-EDITED VERSION OF GEORGE LUCAS' STAR WARS, THE PHANTOM MENACE.
THIS HARD TO FIND VERSION IS RUMORED TO HAVE BEGUN AS 'FRIENDLY PASS AROUND' ITEM WHICH SPARKED ENOUGH EXCITEMENT AND CONTROVERSY IN THE WORLD OF STAR WARS FANS THAT IT BECAME AN INSTANT MUST SEE COLLECTOR'S ITEM.
THIS IMPRESSIVE VERSION ATTACKS THE WEAKNESSES IN THE FILM'S THEATRICAL RELEASE CREATING MUCH STRONGER CHARACTERS AND STORY THROUGH SKILLFUL EDITING OF A SIMPLE 'OFF THE SHELF' VHS VERSION OF THE FILM.
IRONICALLY, IT TRULY IS A COMPLIMENT TO GEORGE LUCAS' CREATIVE VISION AND A WELCOME SURPRISE TO DISAPPOINTED STAR WARS FANS EVERYWHERE.
THIS MAY IN FACT BE THE WAY THE FILM SHOULD'VE BEEN RELEASED.
CLICK HERE TO ENTER
THE PHANTOM EDIT
STAR WARS
THE PHANTOM EDIT
SPECIAL COLLECTOR'S EDITION
DIGITALLY THX MASTERED
The Phantom Edit: **drawing plaudits from fans and legendary directors alike – catch it while you can**

With Star Wars Episode II now less than a year away, the usual frenetic buzz of the online rumour mill was recently overshadowed by news of its oft-maligned predecessor. Those hardcore fans who wept bitter tears at the anti-climactic disappointment of *The Phantom Menace* found salvation in the promise of a completely re-edited version, dubbed *The Phantom Edit* (***members.onecenter.com/hollywood/phantomedit***) courtesy of an enterprising fan, on behalf of the 'George Lucas Generation'.

It's 20 minutes shorter, bug-eyed Rasta alien Jar Jar Binks is gone to the point of being incidental and Anakin's 'Yippee!' muppet-speak is nothing but a bad memory. Fan sites like TheForce.Net (***www.theforce.net***) have hailed it as better than the original and even Mr Lucas himself wants to see it, citing it as exactly the sort of creativity the Net thrives on. While Lucasfilm is usually quick to stomp on unauthorised use of its films, it issued a statement claiming that the film shows fans 'just having fun with Star Wars.' Could such work lead to a whole new area of Net creativity, with the ultimate challenge making *Pearl Harbor* watchable? Excellent coverage of the new version can be found at ***www.zapzit.com***, while further *Star Wars* fan flicks can be found at ***www.starwars.atomfilms.com***.

Before Ewan McGregor once again sparks up his light sabre for the salivating hordes, we can see him frolicking in 1920s Paris making doe eyes at the indescribably sexy Nicole Kidman in *Moulin Rouge*. Directed by Baz Luhrmann (*Romeo + Juliet*), this sumptuous left-bank musical sees McGregor as a love-struck poet who falls for Kidman's courtesan. The site (***www.clubmoulinrouge.com***) has both Flash and HTML versions resembling Terry Gilliam's Monty Python animations.

While the basic site offers clips from the soundtrack as well as character bios and the trailer, the site offers far more in its 'Members' section (no registration needed). Here, you get 360-degree virtual tours of the gorgeous sets, Behind-The-Scenes clips with your outrageously camp host Toulouse Lautrec (worth it just to see Kidman's naughty pout when asked what her favourite position is), and a plethora of desktop pictures ensuring a decidedly sultry Windows set-up. Great fun, and if the site's extensive profile of the club's history whets your appetite, then book a seat at the real thing: ***www.moulinrouge.fr***.

My name is what?

Will the last Real Slim Shady to leave please turn the lights off?

Until now, peroxide-topped, filthy-tongued rapper Eminem has been coasting. Having risen to the top of the tree with almost indecent haste, he has pulled off that rare trick of being familiar the world over – chainsaw, white vest, song about crazed fan – while still being seen as an 'artist' with something to say.

Throw in a few law enforcement run-ins and you have a star cool enough to be immortalised in his own online cartoon. In fact, go to ***www.slimshadyworld.com*** and marvel; the site and the cartoon are great – full of cheeky, irrevant, puerile humour and bad language. The cartoons, to which Eminem even lends his voice, are like a dark *Beavis & Butthead* and worthy of more coverage. But this is not enough to save him. In a matter of weeks, Eminem will re-release his old single *The Way I Am* – see ***www.eminem.com***, a tasty but rather too flashy site, for details.

Slim Shady World: narrated by the man himself

At first glance, the track is a treat. A collaboration with Marilyn Manson, the dark lord of shock rock, it positively drips with sex, drugs and rock 'n' roll. (Incidentally, you should steal a look at ***www.marilynmanson.com***. Skip through the cod satanic symbols and messages on how to access the Devil and you'll find an artist who takes the Web seriously, constantly updating the news and frequently leaving fans Webcam messages. It skins the

Moulin Rouge: corsets galore

The trailer for Tim Burton's highly-anticipated 're-imagining' of the beloved 1968 classic *Planet Of The Apes* (***www.planetoftheapes.com***) promised a storming new version with Chuck Heston's intrepid explorer replaced by Mark Wahlberg and well-dressed, Roddy McDowall-toned apes exchanged for hordes of imperious, mean-looking ones. Advance buzz has been strong and the site will calm most fans.

If nothing else, the suitably futuristic site provides an excellent glimpse into the film's astounding costumes and sets, plus an array of interviews. Perhaps most eye-catching of all is the innovative contest, 'Project A.P.E.' (***www.projectape.com/index.html***), an adventure for owners of Global Positioning Systems. The idea is for people to set up caches all over the world and share the co-ordinates of them on the Net. GPS users can then use the co-ordinates to find the caches. Not bad, eh?

Planet Of The Apes: looking hairy

co.uk version.) But the new version of the single positively stinks. Without Dr Dre's deft touch, Eminem is left rattling with the resonance of an empty peanut shell.

The clouds began to gather earlier this spring when he agreed to perform on stage with Sir Elton John. He only just got away with it. When he and Marilyn take to the stage together at Reading at the end of August, it will not be a glorious tornado of noise and dark intent as everyone expects, but the first public viewing of what will be a long, uncomfortable wake. Redemption, we're afraid, will be a long time coming.

Counterstrike: not on the Net

GAMES

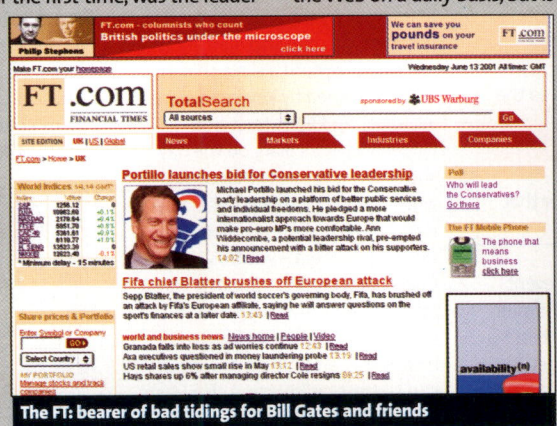
Online gaming? Still waiting...

The games industry comes to a roaring head every May in Los Angeles, and if ever the Internet was the focus for the future of console and PC gaming, this was the year. The Electronic Entertainment Expo saw Microsoft (***www.xbox.com***) confirm a $299 retail price and November 8 launch date for Xbox in the US, and a massive commitment to broadband gaming for the machine. 'We're not about text, we're not about browsing, we're not about email – we're about online gaming... It's gonna be fast because it's gonna be broadband,' Robbie Bach, Microsoft's chief Xbox officer, told attendees at a press conference the day before the show proper got underway. A large section of Microsoft's plans consisted of the coming years for Xbox online.

Microsoft soon admitted that things weren't going to plan

Sony (***www.playstation.com***) made similar statements in its PlayStation2conference, revealing the first online game for the machine, *SOCOM NavySeals*. The team-based shooter will launch later this year in America, but failed to set the crowd's opinion alight, showing less than impressive frame-rates and looking extremely early in its development.

Nintendo (***www.nintendo.com***), showing its mightily impressive Gamecube for the first time, was the leader in what transpired to be extreme caution over pushing online gaming as the way forward for the console. Gamecube comes with an ethernet port, but President Hiroshi Yamauchi refused to commit to anything to do with the Internet, saying only that if there was no way to make money from online games, Nintendo would simply not pursue them.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Industries
Companies
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Portillo launches bid for Conservative leadership
Michael Portillo launched his bid for the Conservative party leadership on a platform of better public services and individual freedoms. He pledged a more internationalist approach towards Europe that would make pro-euro MPs more comfortable. Ann Widdecombe, a potential leadership rival, pre-empted his announcement with a bitter attack on his supporters.
Read
Fifa chief Blatter brushes off European attack
Sepp Blatter, the president of world soccer's governing body, Fifa, has brushed off an attack by Fifa's European affiliate, saying he will answer questions on the sport's finances at a later date.
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Share prices & Portfolio
Enter Symbol or Company
GO
Select Country
MY PORTFOLIO
Manage stocks and track companies
world and business news News home | People | Video
Granada falls into loss as ad worries continue
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Aol executives questioned in money laundering probe
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US retail sales show small rise in May
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Hays shares up 6% after managing director Cole resigns
Read
Poll
Who will lead the Conservatives?
Go there
The FT Mobile Phone
The phone that means business
click here
availability(m)

The FT: bearer of bad tidings for Bill Gates and friends

Yamauchi's remarks came as something of a shock to an industry pushing hard for the emergence of broadband. As the ball started to roll in the wake of the show, Microsoft admitted things were not going according to plan, and directly contradicted the mission statement from E3. In an interview with the *Financial Times* (***www.ft.com***), Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer gave ominous quotes on Xbox's multi-play capabilities. 'We have grown more pessimistic about this [broadband penetration] than we were a few years ago... It has proceeded more slowly than we expected,' he admitted.

'Xbox allows for broadband connections. But the fundamental reason people will buy Xbox is to play games locally. The strategy for Internet gaming is dependent on broadband capability. It is possible that some won't buy the Xbox because they don't have broadband,' Ballmer added.

Whoops. More warning signs are beginning to emerge regarding the state of the gaming Internet. A new edition of the world's most popular online shooter, *Half-Life* anti-terrorist mod *Counterstrike* (***www.counterstrike.net***), has been confirmed as a single-player game. Offline. Literally millions of people play the game over the Web on a daily basis, but is this the first real admission that mass-market Web use is not proceeding as initially thought? The game guys with the smart money are starting to err on the side of caution: is 'the Future of Gaming' about to grind to an almost comical halt? Probably best to ask Microsoft in about five years. According to analysts, it'll take at least that long before Xbox turns in a profit...

WORDS: DANNY GRAYDON (MOVIES), DECLAN ALBISTON (MUSIC), PATRICK GARRATT (GAMES)

:// NEW SITES

A rare bit of light relief for the ladies

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THE DAILY DROP-IN
13 June 2001
The hype of the day chewed up and spat out
Bitchin
CLINTON – DESPERATE OR WHAT? Incredible what former presidents will do for a bit of press... 13-06-01 LATEST POLL
TIME TO RETIRE TRIGGER HAPPY TV 13-06-01 LATEST POLL
PRIMA MARTINA IN £25M TRAINER SCANDAL If the shoe doesn't fit... sue their asses. 12-06-01 POLL
BECKS TO STAR AS HIMSELF IN MOVIE Oh no! Not another celebrity biopic... 12-06-01 POLL
Rate 'n Slate
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PSYCHOBITCH OF THE WEEK: MADONNA 12-06-01 LATEST
TOP FIVE: New careers for William Hague. Part 1: the face of an ad campaign: 12-06-01 LATEST
R.I.P.: Penny from the Big Brother house 09-06-01
News Bites
HAVE-A-GO HERO CELEBS CAUSE HAVOC Publicity-mad personalities are public menace... 12-06-01 JUST IN
STEPS' H ENDS GANGLAND FEUDING Healing popstar has gangsters holding hands. 11-06-01
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Rabbit-On: giving ladies light relief from the rigours of their day with a combination of news, gossip and good old humour

REVIEWED

EyeWitness
www.ibiscom.com
First-hand accounts, written and aural, from the ancients to today

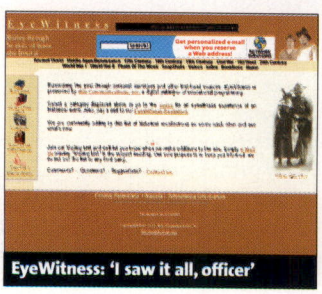
Rabbit-On
www.rabbit-on.com
Gossip, humour and features for women of all ages

The Train Whine
www.thetrainwhine.co.uk
Get your complaints direct to the people responsible

Red Letter Days
www.redletterdays.co.uk
Exhilarating experiences for that special someone

A first-hand account of any event has the immediate effect of conjuring it anew, so when so much of history comes in the form of later generations' interpretations, it's refreshing and fascinating to get it from the horse's mouth. Offering a collection of written accounts from the ancient world to the 20th Century, **EyeWitness** (***www.ibiscom.com***) provides plenty to intrigue history buffs and students alike. Among documents from the ancient world is Pliny's letter to Tacitus as he watched the imminent destruction of Pompeii by the erupting Mount Vesuvius; you can also read about conditions aboard a slave ship in 1829 as penned by Reverend Robert Walsh, or find an extract from Queen Victoria's diary on the day she became the new monarch. Not surprisingly, most of the aural records in the Voices section come from the war era – witness Neville Chamberlain's declaration of war against Germany in 1939 – and most of the samples relate to US history. It is, after all, an American site, so the bias here and elsewhere (the written sections include Civil War and the Old West) is understandable, but the site still makes for some interesting reading with potential to become a very useful resource for historians.

There's nothing like a bit of a laugh to put a spring in a girl's step, however dull or gloomy her day, and there's something particularly invigorating about a chuckle when it comes – harmlessly, of course – at someone else's expense. Delivering a deliciously tongue-in-cheek take on celebrity gossip and a liberal dose of spoof stories, it's exactly this kind of humour which forms the core of **Rabbit-On** (***www.rabbit-on.com***). Promising 'light relief for ladies', new gossip stories on the site are also available as free SMS messages to your mobile – an ideal way to brighten up an endless wait at the bus-stop or an interminable meeting (make sure your phone's on 'silent' first). Mobile users can also download icons and jingles 'to make your mobile even more annoying' or get one of the virtual flirts to send a mate an anonymous saucy message. The site itself offers users the chance to interact by adding their opinion to 'news' stories – 'is Martina Hingis just being a prima donna?', 'Is yoga just very boring?' – or the opportunity to nominate a topical public figure for a Top Five category; when we visited it was new careers for William Hague. It's an attractive site as well as a sassy one, and easy navigation makes for an ideal quick fix in the office, too. The site's logo sums up Rabbit-On's distinctive attitude: the bunnygirl logo in the form of a hand-shadow that looks uncannily like a V-sign...

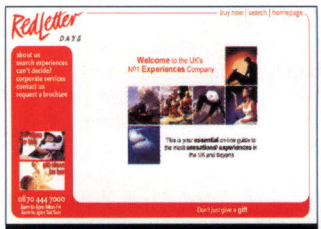


EyeWitness: 'I saw it all, officer'

Train Whine: 'we're sorry to announce'

Points failure, leaves on the line, pigeon poo on the track: with excuses as pathetic as these routinely doled out by the train companies, it's no wonder that late trains can make a commuter's blood boil. And when you've made a point of struggling out of bed to catch the 8.09 in order to get to a job interview on time, the lack of explanation for its absence is enough to bring you to tears in the middle of the platform. Every time it happens, you vow to writing a stinking letter to the train company to let them know where they should direct their service. But in the end it's easier to try and forget about it than to go to the trouble of finding out who to complain to and how to do it.

Now, only the speed of your Net connection need delay your vitriolic missive. **The Train Whine** (***www.thetrainwhine.co.uk***) – its name



Red-Letter-Days: for someone special

a suitable take on the online ticket ordering service The Trainline, which features among the links – provides direct email links to almost all UK train companies, allowing commuters to quickly vent their spleen in a coffee break, or even before they start their day. Should you want to take a more formal approach, postal addresses for each of the companies are provided, too; get your facts straight first by checking their linked Web sites. With that lot off your chest, you can get back to focusing on your work. That is, until you're delayed on the way home...

Living, as we do, in a material world, it's easy to forget that living life to the max comes as much – if not more – from having great experiences as from owning super-deluxe widescreen TVs with in-built digiboxes. So instead of shelling out on yet another useless gizmo for a friend or relative to find a home for next time they have a birthday, do them a favour and give them a great experience instead. **Red Letter Days** (***www.redletterdays.co.uk***) has made this as easy as doing any other kind of online shopping. Choose from over 250 experiences, from adrenalin rushes to pampering or simply the life-enriching, submit the usual payment requirements and they'll send your recipient a gift certificate with a personalised message. And there's no need to break the bank; if your budget for life-enhancing experiences doesn't stretch past £49 you'll still be able to choose between a day's go-karting, an aromatherapy massage and the chance to acquire some circus skills. At the other end of the spectrum is a personal shopping consultation or the chance to drive an ex-Formula One racing car. And if the cost of a shuttle launch into space for two is beyond your wallet, you could always take the opportunity of a two-day simulated astronaut experience at the Nasa Space Centre for £3,250 – almost all the fun Dennis Tito had at the fraction of the price and none of that funny business of having to wee into a tube.

Look what we've found!

HESTON SERVICES What do motorway users look for when they're not on the road?

SIMON COX
CHAUFFEUR

Obviously I don't need the Internet in my line of work, so I mainly use it to look up information about films, and actors. I'd say my favourite site is Hotdog magazine (***www.hotdogmagazine.com***).

CHRIS CAIRNS
COMPUTER ENGINEER

I use the Internet for work as well as pleasure. As you can probably tell I use it a lot for work! However my favourite site is the UK's best roller-coaster club, ***www.rccgb.co.uk*** as I'm a big rollercoaster enthusiast.

SEAN QUIGLEY
ADS AND PROMOTIONS

The Internet is just another Yellow Pages to me, as you still have to get people to visit your site. My favourite site is obviously my own company's at ***www.freezone.co.uk/marketcapture***.

SAM LAZAR
MEDICAL SALES REP

I mainly look at sites to do with movies, music and entertainment – family-based, though! I visit ***www.corrsonline.com*** a lot, although it's not for me, it's for my sister...

TIM MARKALL
STUDENT

I mainly use the Net for email but I'm also into tennis so I use it to check the scores. My favourite site is ***www.stevegtennis.com*** which gives the ATP Tour rankings and results.

SHEILA CHOW
FAST FOOD OPERATIVE

I use the Net for email regularly, but I also like the Hong Kong TVB site (***www.tvb.com.hk***) for celebrity info. I also like to download ring-tones for my mobile phone.

JAMES DAVIS
GRAPHIC DESIGNER

I use Netscape and get my email through ***www.netscapeonline.co.uk***, too. I don't use the Net a lot at work, although if we're looking for a specific logo or symbol then it can be very useful.

KAREN MOORE
MARKETING MANAGER

My favourite site is probably ***www.barmeister.com*** – thousands of cocktail recipes and drinking games. I also use the Net quite a lot to find out what's on in London, as I've only recently moved there.

DAVE CAMPBELL
PUBLICIST

I use the Net for music news, football transfer gossip and buying CDs. My favourite site is Pet of the Day (***www.petoftheday.com***). Where else can you see pictures of terrapins in tuxedos?

INTERVIEWS: DAN GRABHAM; PICTURES: RICHARD LAWRENCE

letters

Send your letters to: Inbox, *the net*, 38-42 Hampton Road, Teddington, Middlesex TW11 0JE or email us at ***thenetnow@haynet.com***

Dear Sir

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Like Richard Hayes (Letters, July issue), I also take issue with your award to Tesco of the 'best site' title in your supermarket supertest. I work on an Apple Mac, and it was only after several frustrating attempts to register on the Tesco site during a brief lunch hour that I resorted to calling the helpline, only to find out it is only fully compatible with PCs. After hijacking a colleague's computer, I finally managed to place my order – a few household good plus the ingredients for a deluxe version of spaghetti carbonara I'd found in a recipe book – in a bid to avoid a trip to my local store. I don't recall an option to accept no substitutes, so imagine the panic and dismay that ensued 45 minutes before my date was due to arrive when I rummaged through the delivery to find bacon instead of pancetta, cheddar instead of fresh parmesan and no evidence whatsoever of parsley - though I noticed it had made it on to the bill along with a crusty baguette included in place of a part-baked ciabatta. The delivery charge also made it on there, even though I'd have much preferred it if they hadn't bother bringing me goods I didn't want in the first place.

I'm no cook, so improvising wasn't on the cards; we went out for a curry instead. But I didn't let the incident rest. For three days I tried to call my local branch of Tesco's, which had delivered the order, in order to complain. To their credit, they were apologetic and refunded me the delivery charge in compensation, but I won't be relying on the site for fresh goods again; clearly those who shop in person get the priority. Better to use online supermarket shopping if, like me, you don't have a car and find it difficult to carry home heavy or unwieldy goods like washing powder or toilet paper. But as far as I'm concerned, when it comes to cooking ingredients there's no such thing as a substitute, so I'll still be traipsing to my local store twice a week for fresh ingredients.

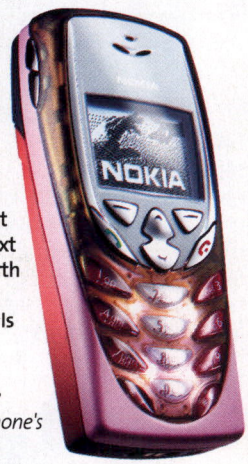
John Walters, London

We agree, Internet shopping is at its best for large or unwieldy goods, just like the large case of Rouge & Blanc wine which will be winging its way to you shortly.

A reader rants

What's the fuss about wireless?

WAP is the biggest waste of space I have ever seen. All my mates went out and bought WAP phones a few months ago and now they're all fed up with them. The connection is slow, you can't do anything you want to and it disconnects all the time. It's rubbish! GPRS sounds pretty useful, but then, didn't everybody say that about WAP before it came out? I bet even that will be pretty rubbish, too.



And what about this 3G (third generation) hype? How long before that becomes a reality? I'll bet we don't see anything this side of 2005. I can't believe the mobile phone companies like Vodafone and BT have paid out such huge sums for their 3G licences when next year, somebody might decide that it's not worth pursuing. After all, everyone keeps going on about how much debt BT has. It's no wonder! Is the whole mobile industry mad?

Chris Johnson, via email

We've used a GPRS phone in the net *offices (see page 44), and although it was quite fast, the phone's screen was a bit small. Until the compromise between screen quality (allowing quicker and easier navigation) and the phone's size is resolved, the speed of the connection is somewhat secondary. As for the third generation phone networks, the signs are pretty good. All the major mobile phone operators are committed to the cause, and so are the phone manufacturers.*

Dear Sir

In your June issue you had an article on keeping children safe on the Internet and checking if they are visiting inappropriate sites by checking the history of Internet usage. You gave some useful pointers on how to access the History by clicking on the History button on the tool bar. My friend's 14-year-old son has recently been given an iMac by his dad. He uses Netscape. My friend (lone parent and complete technophobe) thinks he is accessing inappropriate sites when unsupervised. Short of removing the plug from the thing when she goes shopping, she doesn't really know what to do. Have you got any advice for her?

Jane Hubbard, via email

As the article mentioned, there are many Internet applications, many of which are also available for Macs, to keep kids safe online. In Netscape you can also view a recent list of sites (called History, as on a PC). In the Communicator menu, choose Tools, then History. To view a page, double-click on it in the list.

Dear Sir

Please can I thank you, and all of the team at *the net*, for your 'Build a Site in 30 Minutes' feature (March issue). I have now got my site up and running at ***www.steveadams.moonfruit.com***. I would not have been able to do it without your help.

Steve Adams, via email

OK, you get your plug – but any future self-publicity disguised as compliments will be passing no further. So don't get any ideas.

Dear Sir

I have set up a photo gallery for family and friends online and would like to know if there is some way to make the pictures into e-cards. I have seen a number of sites that are e-card specific (eg. ***www.e-cards.com***), but am curious if it is at all possible to do this with my photo gallery (with a bit of tweaking to the code of course). Maybe this could be an article in a future issue?

Charn Hooker, Canada, via email

If you turn to page 112 of this issue's Advice Centre you'll see our definitive guide to online photo galleries – several of which will also allow you to create e-cards from your saved digital pictures.

Dear Sir

So businesses are blocking access to Webmail after another virus outbreak (July issue). While I'm sure some offices have been hit badly by viruses in the past, the majority of them do no damage at all, aside from directing people to the odd dodgy site or emailing themselves to a few business contacts.

I'm sure half the reason people come up with viruses is so they can milk the publicity afterwards – this really is one of the few cases where I'm sure ignoring things will make them go away.

I've suffered a number of viruses in my inbox over the past couple of years, but I've successfully deleted them all without any problems. Has anybody ever really been more than slightly inconvenienced by a virus, or is it all just headlines?

John Russell, High Wycombe

WINE FOR WORDS!

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COME AND MEET US!

Want advice straight from the experts? Come and talk to us at Live 2001

The Internet has moved fast. In just a few years, it has transformed from an exclusive club presenting ugly, plain text pages to the fun-packed, fully interactive adventure we all know today. And it keeps changing by the minute, placing new demands on your connection, your software and your knowhow.

Which is why we're offering a free advice service to visitors at Live 2001, the UK's biggest consumer electronics show, to be held at Birmingham's NEC between 21 and 23 September. Come along and *the net* team will be on hand every day to solve your problems – be it choosing the right ISP, deciding whether to go broadband, or simply ensuring the software handling your browsing and email is the best it can be.

And while you're at the show, you can catch up on a host of other new technologies. This year sees the launch of the always-on mobile Internet in the form of GPRS; manufacturers are unveiling a wealth of next-generation handsets, and most of the operators are rolling out new GPRS pricing packages (BT has already announced its pricing for the service – others will soon follow).

The service promises Internet heaven: with GPRS, email and rich Web pages are only a click away. Or at least that's the promise: come and judge for yourself at Live.

Meanwhile, the growth in broadband has fuelled interest in online gaming, and soon Sony and Microsoft are to go head-to-head in cyberspace, Sony with its online facility for PlayStation 2 and Microsoft with the launch of Xbox. Sega has withdrawn from console manufacturer and concentrated instead on what it does best: involving, exciting games.

Aside from *the net*, you'll also find stands dedicated to our sister publications, *Stuff* and *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision*. Featuring the hottest new gadgets for the discerning male, *Stuff* will be showcasing its newly announced Awards at the Show, which promise to range from must-have PDAs to drop-dead gorgeous laptops. *What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision*, meanwhile, will be on hand to give advice on choosing and buying your hi-fi and surround sound systems, as well as giving state-of-the-art demonstrations of new products on their stand.

Get your advice from the magazine with the answers – put 21-23 September in your diary now.

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Hooray for students

YAHOO! ***www.yahoo.com*** How the most famous site in the world started life on campus

:YAHOO!

WHAT IS IT?
Directory of a quarter of a million links to hand-picked sites, sorted by a complicated system of categories and cross-referral

LAUNCHED
April 1994

TRAFFIC
Serves a billion page impressions every day and counts 60 million registered users

BASE
Sunnyvale, California

KEY FEATURES
Searchable directory, Web site building facility, personalised sections for registered users, mobile services, Web mail, Google search engine

WHAT DID YOU DO AT UNIVERSITY? If you were anything like the typical student, your sporadic learning was almost certainly punctuated by lengthy bouts of drinking, partying and general apathy. Jerry Yang and David Filo might have missed out on the social side of college, but they were founding of a cyber empire which would catapult them into the Top 100 Richest Americans list with estimated fortunes in the billions.

In 1994, the two were studying electrical engineering at Stanford University in California using the embryonic, academic-based Internet to help their research. Early search engines helped them find information, but the pair noticed that their bookmarks were running into the hundreds and they had no way of categorising the links for easy access. Almost accidentally, they'd stumbled on what was to become the most famous Web site in the world, a brand that became synonymous with the Internet. By posting their bookmarks onto a site, Yang and Filo created Yahoo!'s first incarnation; when fellow students soon began asking to use the service, the penny quickly dropped – here was a way of organising sites that made sense of what was already becoming a sprawling mass of cyberspace.

Electrical engineering was soon forgotten on the journey to Internet enterpreneurdom as enthusiasm and an impressive business plan brought them a $1 million start-up loan from venture capitalists in 1995. The early days weren't easy – a flood wrecked the site's servers – but the audience was hooked, and new executives like Tim Koogle and Jeff Mallett, alongside the two publicity-shy founders, became new media celebrities. Yahoo! became a byword for quality online, the site everyone knew (by word of mouth, given the relatively low ad spend) to visit.

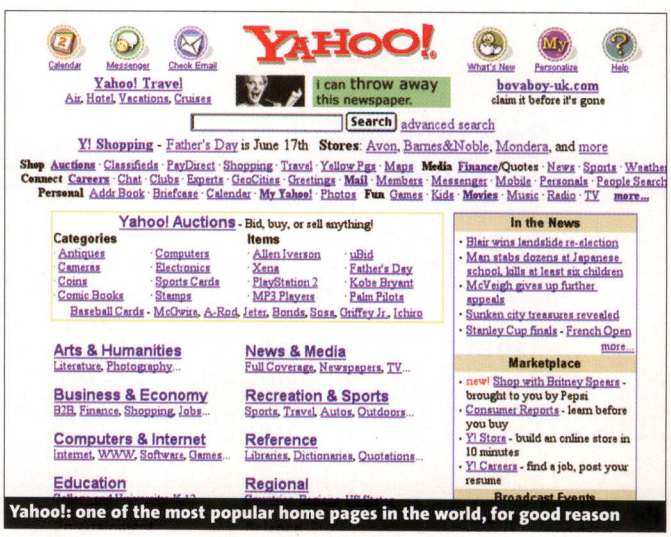
Seven years on, Yahoo! dwarfs almost every other site on earth. Its figures astound – it lists more than a quarter of a million sites in 20,000 different categories; 67 million people are registered with the site, and 192 million users a month create 1 billion page views a day. There are regional sites in Japan, Australia, the UK (***uk.yahoo.com***) and a host of other countries. For every eight dollars spent by online advertisers the world over last year, one dollar went to Yang and Filo. Amazon might be the business model that dot coms aspire to, but Yahoo! is something altogether bigger – a Nasdaq-listed, profit-making company with a gargantuan turnover.

'It's a heavy responsibility, a bit like being a newspaper editor' – Yang

No longer is Yahoo! just a Web directory, either: it has branched out into Webmail, auctions, shopping channels, site-building (by buying Geocities), mailing lists, wireless services and small business advice. It's the directory, though, that pulls in the users and advertisers, and since Yahoo! added Google's search services to the mix, there has been no better place to search the Net.

The directory works because it cuts no corners – every part of the process is checked by a human rather than the 'spiders' employed by search engines. Every time a Yahoo! spider finds a site or a user refers it, one of 40-odd professional reviewers decides if it's worthy of inclusion (no mean feat, as many Web masters will tell you bitterly), writes a brief description and assigns it to a category. 'It's a heavy responsibility,' sighs Yang, 'a bit like being a newspaper editor'.

Some doom-mongers fret about the share price, which has fluctuated over the past year as the market lost faith in new media, and the site's reliance on a falling online ad market. But Yahoo! has foundations far more solid than other dot coms. Like the ravens in the Tower, if this one disappears, the whole of the new economy can pack up and go home...


YAHOO!
Calendar
Messenger
Check Email
What's New
Personalize
Help
Yahoo! Travel
Air, Hotel, Vacations, Cruises
i can throw away this newspaper.
bovaboy-uk.com
claim it before it's gone
Search
advanced search
Y! Shopping - Father's Day is June 17th Stores: Avon, Barnes&Noble, Mondera, and more
Shop Auctions · Classifieds · PayDirect · Shopping · Travel · Yellow Pgs · Maps Media Finance/Quotes · News · Sports · Weather
Connect Careers · Chat · Clubs · Experts · GeoCities · Greetings · Mail · Members · Messenger · Mobile · Personals · People Search
Personal Addr Book · Briefcase · Calendar · My Yahoo! · Photos Fun Games · Kids · Movies · Music · Radio · TV more...
Yahoo! Auctions - Bid, buy, or sell anything!
Categories
Antiques · Computers
Cameras · Electronics
Coins · Sports Cards
Comic Books · Stamps
Items
Allen Iverson · uBid
Xena · Father's Day
PlayStation 2 · Kobe Bryant
MP3 Players · Palm Pilots
Baseball Cards - McGwire, A-Rod, Jeter, Bonds, Sosa, Griffey Jr., Ichiro
In the News
Blair wins landslide re-election
Man stabs dozens at Japanese school, kills at least six children
McVeigh gives up further appeals
Sunken city treasures revealed
Stanley Cup finals - French Open
more...
Arts & Humanities
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Sports, Travel, Autos, Outdoors...
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Internet, WWW, Software, Games...
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Education
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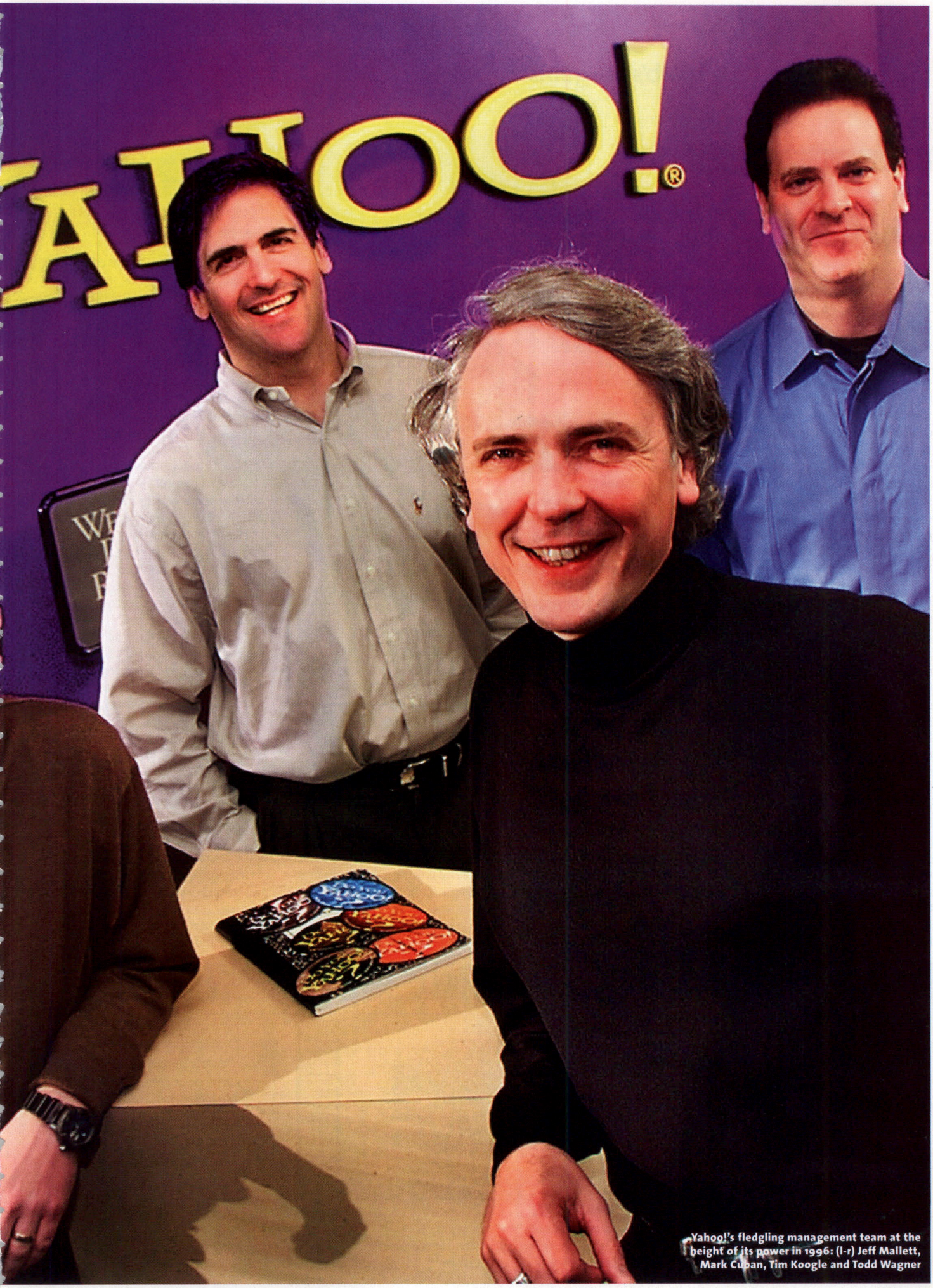
Marketplace
new! Shop with Britney Spears - brought to you by Pepsi
Consumer Reports - learn before you buy
Y! Store - build an online store in 10 minutes
Y! Careers - find a job, post your resume
Broadcast Events
Yahoo!: one of the most popular home pages in the world, for good reason



Yahoo!'s fledgling management team at the height of its power in 1996: (l-r) Jeff Mallett, Mark Cuban, Tim Koogle and Todd Wagner

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURE: GETTY IMAGES

MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS SHOPPING ONLINE

Strike a chord

Annoy the neighbours with tuneful buys...

With music festivals taking place all over the country this month, budding instrumentalists everywhere will want to progress from tennis rackets and pots and pans to the real thing. Instruments can be expensive, but looking on the right Web sites will make making a racket more affordable.

A good place for guitarists to start is the GuitarSuperstore (***www.guitarsuperstore.com***), which managed to produce an Epiphone SG400 for a very reasonable £269. You'll still need to fork out for an amplifier, so if you're not quite ready to spend hundreds on your hobby, there's always the all-inclusive starter guitar package at £169.

GuitarSuperstore promises delivery within seven days, but if you can't wait that long Musicianshop.com (***www.musicianshop.com***) claims to send everything by 24-hour delivery. It's odd that the 'UK's biggest musical e-tailer' should offer such a tiny range of instruments, but if you're not after big names you'll find good-value alternatives in amplifiers and accessories.

Pick your instrument from the categories at ***www.guvnor.com*** to view all relevant items available across the portal's 50 stores, plus their price and condition (some are second-hand). Then click through to the store page to buy online or find contact details. Even small stores turned up good deals, such as a full drum kit for £210 from Stage One Music in Colchester.

Staffordshire store Arcade Music's £233 was also pretty good for a Roland EM-10 keyboard – until we found it for £179 at Sounds Live (***www.soundslive.co.uk***). Among the 'incredible low prices' here was a Fender Standard Precision bass at just £319, although there was a fairly hefty shipping charge. Aside from numerous guitars, amps and keyboards, the site did a particularly good line in digital hardware.

Piedog (***www.piedog.com***) had the largest range of stock we found, all at impressively competitive prices. Despite so many separate categories, it was still easy to find excellent deals such as mid-standard drum kits from £225 and starter guitar packages from £115. Under Grade B Stock, a few faint scratches didn't make a stunning Les Paul Vintage 100 Sunburst for just £185 any less of a bargain.

The Birmingham Drum and Percussion Centre (***www.birminghamdrumcentre.co.uk***) offered 31 drum kits for all standards, and even a kit by legendary makers Pearl was affordable at £360. It was disappointing, though, that only cymbals and snare drums could be bought separately, and even then at professional prices only.

GUITAR ACCESSORIES FROM £11
www.piedog.com
Four essential items: strap, slide, tuner and wah-wah pedal

Alongside its pricey digital music and keyboard sections, there were still bargains to be found at Rose-Morris's site (***www.rose-morris.co.uk***): at £330, a new Epiphone Les Paul Standard was even cheaper than at Piedog. And for budding guitarists wanting a big name without the matching price there was the Marshall all-inclusive Rock Kit at only £199. There were no pictures of products and you couldn't buy online, but ordering by email or a freephone number proved a winner.

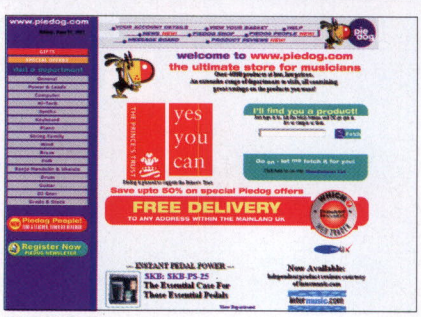
In addition to a wide range of good-value stock, Regent Guitars (***www.regentguitars.co.uk***) offered a range of services including sound advice on buying your first guitar, including the importance of making sure any 'freebies' with starter packages are actually worth having. You'll want to watch the small print on the site itself, too, as untidy organisation sometimes made added VAT, delivery and other extras difficult to spot at first glance.

Guitarmania (***www.guitarmania.com***) wasn't particularly cheap but won points with its friendly, enthusiastic tone, and the complete starter kit from Fender was a reasonable £205. There was a good range of instruments under the main Electric Guitar and Basses sections, plus an entire section devoted to left-handers.

If you don't mind the chance of the odd scratch or a slightly dodgy C# key, the second-hand instruments at online auctioneer eBay (***www.ebay.co.uk***) included some amazing bargains – like an Epiphone Les Paul Standard guitar for £200, or a left-handed Les Paul copy by Washburn at a knockdown £100.

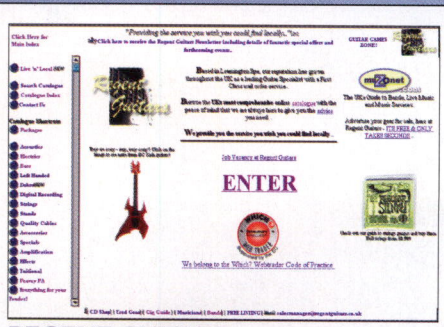
Once you're kitted out, you'll want to learn how to play like a pro. Look Music (***www.lookmusic.com***) has a wide range of books and videos to show you how it's done, whatever your instrument; Highly Strung (***www.highstrung.co.uk***) offers a range of guides specifically for guitarists. Then it's down to you to put in some serious practice...

;-) Our top musical instrument sites


welcome to www.piedog.com
the ultimate store for musicians
yes you can
FREE DELIVERY
Save upto 50% on special Piedog offers

PIEDOG
www.piedog.com ★★★★★
Almost too many categories, each offering excellent deals for top-name instruments.

SOUNDSLIVE
www.soundslive.co.uk ★★★★★
Competitive prices on guitars and amps, plus an enormous range of digital hardware.



REGENT GUITARS
www.regentguitars.co.uk ★★★
Good deals on new and used instruments, plus sound advice for first-time buyers.

WORDS: ALEX NEWBY; PICTURES: CHRIS RENNIE

YAMAHA PRS260 HOME KEYBOARD £149.99

www.piedog.com

An ideal first keyboard, complete with a selection of different sounds and drum samples.

EPIPHONE LES PAUL STUDIO GUITAR £355

www.piedog.com

Look and sound the part with this slightly superior version of the Les Paul Standard, which is also available from Piedog at a good price.

30 WATT MARSHALL AMPLIFIER £110

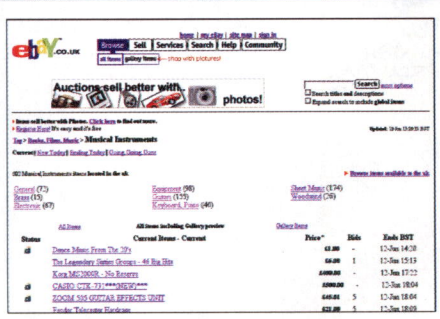
www.soundslive.co.uk

Marshall is the biggest and arguably the best name in guitar amplifiers. This baby should help to make you sound like a real pro.

BIRMINGHAM DRUM CENTRE

www.birminghamdrumcentre.com ★★★★

Choose from 31 complete drum kits for every standard and price range, plus accessories galore.



EBAY

www.ebay.co.uk ★★★

If you're not hung up on having a brand new instrument, you can bid for bargains here.

GUVNOR.COM

www.guvnor.com ★★★★

A portal to over 50 UK music stores, enabling you to search among them for the best deals.

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Our verdict on the first real-time Internet handheld
ONLINE GAMING SPECIAL
Tricks to supercharge your gaming – without spending any cash
RING-FENCE YOUR PC
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CATHERINE ZETA JONES
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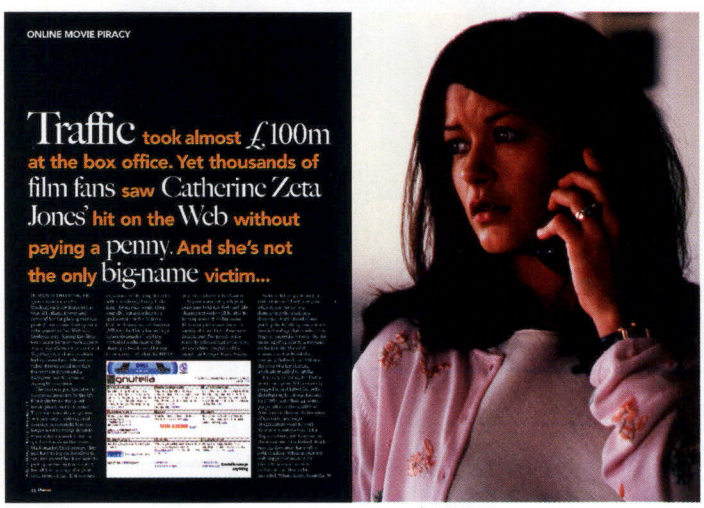
ONLINE MOVIE PIRACY
Traffic took almost £100m at the box office. Yet thousands of film fans saw Catherine Zeta Jones' hit on the Web without paying a penny. And she's not the only big-name victim...

The World's 20 Best Online Stores
You can buy anything online – but that doesn't mean you should. Presenting the shops we can prove deliver the goods

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The A to Z of the Internet

WORDS: ANDY HUTCHINSON; PICTURES: DAVID SEMPLE

ANYONE WHO'S EVER TRIED TO call an ISP helpline will know what a frustrating experience it can be. Even if you manage to get your query answered in an acceptable amount of time, the chances are you won't be getting the full story – and as many helplines cheerfully charge you anything up to £1 a minute, you'll be paying through the nose for the privilege, too.

What's most redundant about such services is the fact that you don't need an expert (or, indeed, someone at a call centre in deepest Lanarkshire) to answer your questions. Most ISP calls boil down to a few standard queries which can be easily answered if you only know where to look. That's why we've compiled this A-Z of FAQs – keep it by your side as you visit cyberspace and you'll soon find your stress levels reduced, not to mention your phone bill. From Acceptable Usage Policy to, erm, zzz..., you'll find all the answers at your fingertips – but if you do still find yourself reaching for the phone for a bit of extra guidance, make sure you see our helplines test on page 98 for a rundown of which ISPs offer cheap, reliable service and which will have you tearing your hair out...

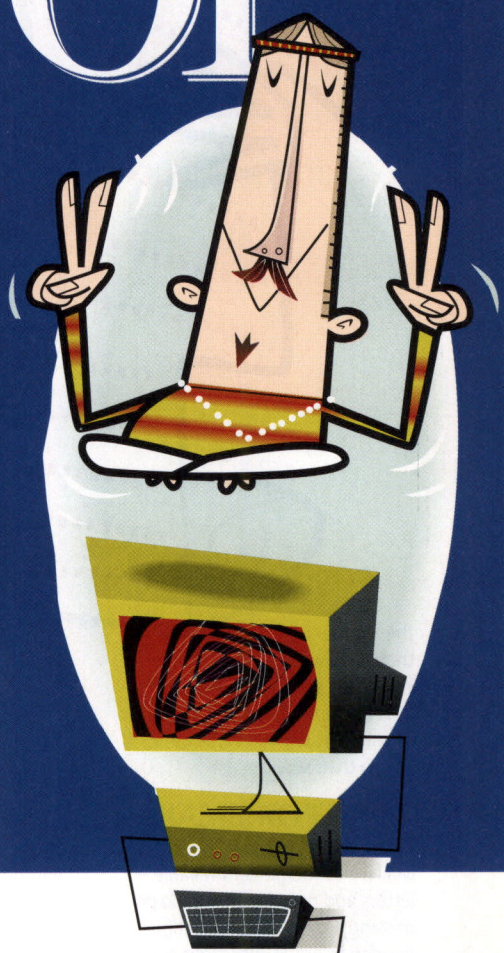
A IS FOR AUP

Anyone who has been freed from the shackles of pay-per-minute Internet access will know that it's extremely liberating – you can surf all day and all night to your heart's content. At least that's what some people think. They believe that because they have subscribed to a 24/7 dial-up they can connect to the Web and never disconnect again. Unfortunately, this belief is often wholly incorrect. If you think we're over-reacting, consult your ISP's AUP – Acceptable Usage Policy.

When you sign up for a free-phone 24/7 dial-up account you are merely paying for the right to connect at any time of the day or night. Have a read through the AUP of most of the freephone ISPs and you'll find this point mentioned. Some ISPs have come clean about what they consider to be reasonable connection time, others merely warn against abuse. So, before you consider hosting your

Nobody has ever connected at their browser's top-rated speed

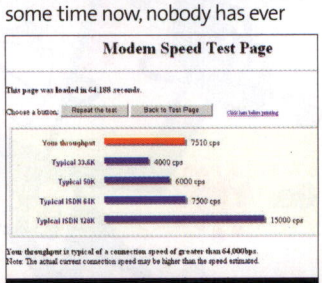
A to Z of now-how



own Web site over your dial-up, read that AUP or you'll end up looking for a new ISP in no time.

B IS FOR BAUD

The modem is coming to the end of its useful life cycle. However, broadband is still some way off for the vast majority of people and that means most Internet users in this country still have to connect via dial-up. The single biggest problem that modem users encounter is with poor baud rates. (The baud rate – originally one Morse code dot per second – measures the speed of signal transfer.) Modems are a technical kludge, using acoustic data to transmit and receive digital information and it's because of this that baud rates are so variable. While 56k modems have been available for some time now, nobody has ever


Modem Speed Test Page
This page was loaded in 64.188 seconds.
Choose a button.
Repeat the test
Back to Test Page
Your throughput
7510 cps
Typical 33.6K
4000 cps
Typical 50K
6000 cps
Typical ISDN 64K
7500 cps
Typical ISDN 128K
15000 cps
Your throughput is typical of a connection speed of greater than 64,000bps.
Note: The actual current connection speed may be higher than the speed estimated.

Modem speed: can you soup it up?

connected at their top-rated speed – it's virtually impossible. About the best you can hope for is 47Kb, so before you phone up your ISP to complain, run the modem test at ***homepage.tinet.ie/~leslie/testpage.htm*** – if you're getting around the 47Kb mark, smile as you wait for broadband availability in your area.

C IS FOR CONTRACT

We've said it before and we'll say it again – read the small print. Some ISPs impose fairly rigorous contracts on their customers, others are happy to let you pay on a monthly basis and leave as and when it suits you. If you're not sure if an ISP is going to offer you a good reliable connection make sure you can leave easily.

D IS FOR DIAL-UP

One of the biggest problems people encounter with their dial-up connections is messed-up settings. Every ISP uses a different set-up; some use static IPs, some don't, others use LCP extensions, others require that you enter the full phone number complete with area and country code. So if your dialup suddenly stops working, perhaps it's something you've done. Either run »

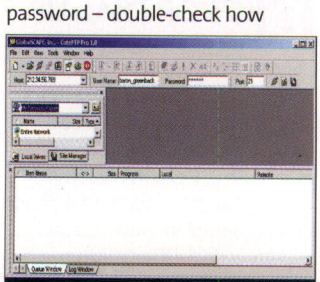
the .ins file that you were given when you subscribed with your ISP, or have a look at the email they sent you welcoming you to their service.

E IS FOR EMAIL

As we all know, the Royal Mail is not 100 percent reliable – letters and parcels can and do go missing. Exactly the same thing can happen to email: messages can get bounced, they can get lost, they can even end up going to completely the wrong person. But 99.9 percent of the time none of this has anything at all to do with your ISP, it's just one of those inherent flaws of the email system and the Internet as it currently stands.

That said, if you can't send or receive any email then it is your ISP's fault. Assuming your connection is still working, check their status page (most ISPs have one of these linked off their main page). If you can send email but not receive it, chances are you've incorrectly entered your password – double-check how you're entering it.

If you're getting email filled with technical gobbledygook in it then you need to change your email client to one that can receive HTML mail – try Outlook Express, which comes free with all Microsoft operating systems.



CuteFTP: if you like that sort of thing

F IS FOR FTP

Just about every ISP on the planet offers its users a small amount of space on its Web servers so they can put up their own Web sites. The problem is that to access that you need to use an FTP program – while other applications have been reinvented for the non-geek, this is one application that's anchored firmly in the ancient history of the Internet.

To connect to your Web space you need four basic pieces of information: a username (usually the same as your dial-up username), a password (usually the same as your dial-up password), a four-part IP address (generally something like 212.34.56.789) and most important of all a port number (usually 21). Use something like CuteFTP Pro, available from ***www.download.com***, and you can enter this information simply from the main interface.

G IS FOR GAMING

ISPs' attitudes to gaming vary enormously and it's worth thoroughly investigating them before you sign up. Some, such as Demon, run their own servers (for games like *Quake* and *Counterstrike*), others would rather you stuck to Freecell. So if you're getting lousy pings in-game, think twice before getting in touch with your ISP.

Online gaming performance is dependent on a number of different factors, but the most useful is software compression. This one feature, which has to be implemented by your ISP, will drop pings over modem or ISDN by a good 30-40ms. So if you want pings lower than your IQ, check to see if your ISP supports software compression before you sign up. They're unlikely to add it just for your benefit.

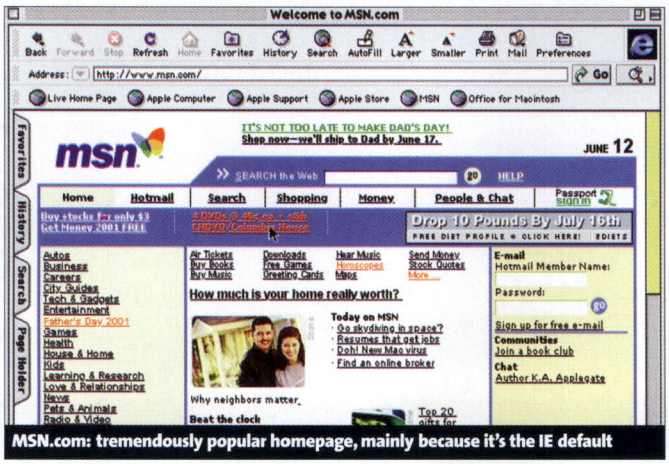
H IS FOR HOMEPAGE

Making your first home page is a modern right of passage – the WWW equivalent of passing your driving test. Read through the FAQs supplied by most of the leading ISPs, however, and you'll quickly realise that this is also one area that confuses the hell out of most people.

Your home page can contain anything you want, although if you're employed in the porn industry you'd be well advised to check your ISP's terms and conditions before posting some pictures from work. If you've never created a Web page before it's a good idea to use one of the templates built into an application like Microsoft FrontPage and modify it accordingly. If you're having trouble seeing your home page remember that you have to include a file called index.htm from which all your other files are linked.

I IS FOR INTERNET EXPLORER

The ubiquitous Web browser: just about every PC on the planet has a copy of IE



MSN.com: tremendously popular homepage, mainly because it's the IE default

installed on it. Here are some commonly found problems and their solutions for this browser.

Problem You're connected but you can't view any Web pages.

Solution This is usually because the proxy has been turned on. Click Tools>Internet Options>Connections>Lan Settings, make sure that the 'Automatically Detect Settings' box is ticked and (if you're using your own dial-up and not the office network) untick 'Use a proxy server'.

Problem You're moving to a new PC and want to back up your favourites.

Ever wondered if the phoneline staff know their stuff? Probably not...

Solution Under Windows 95/98/ME open your Windows directory (usually on your C:// drive) and copy the entire 'Favourites' directory to a floppy disk or safe drive.

Problem When printing out a Web page for future reference you can't read a thing on the page because the background's so dark.

Solution Click on Tools>Internet Options>Advanced and untick the box labelled 'Print background colour and images'.

Problem When you click an email link on a Web page, the wrong email program starts.

Solution Click Tools>Internet Options>Programs and select the correct program from the drop-down email list.

Problem Internet Explorer is displaying full-screen and you can't get it back to its windowed state.

Solution Hit the F11 key.

J IS FOR JAVA

HTML is an extremely limited language – in fact all it's good for is displayed text or pictures in a Web browser. For most of the other stuff, like neat in-browser games, you need to use 'applets' coded in a separate language like Java. The problem is that Java is a picky blighter and it's often the cause of lots of crashes and glitches. Our best advice is to steer clear of it – especially in Netscape Navigator or Opera, where the Java implementations leave something to be desired.

K IS FOR KNOWLEDGE BASE

When you call your ISP's premium 0845 customer support line the person who deals with your problem is usually sat in front of a computer running a knowledge base. These large databases contain commonly encountered problems and their solutions and if you've ever wondered if the support line technician dealing with you knows what they're talking about, the answer is probably not. Many companies make their knowledge bases available to their customers online and you can save yourself some cash by accessing it on an ISP's site.

L IS FOR LATENCY

Has your Net connection suddenly slowed down? Are Web pages taking an eternity to appear? You're experiencing high latency, which is probably due to the failure of a router somewhere between your dial-up connection and the Web page you're trying to view. Check your ISP's home page (this should be unaffected by latency) and look for 'service status'.

M IS FOR MODEM

Many people get in touch with their ISPs when the problem is actually at the user's end – normally with the modem.

Problem You can't connect at 56K.

Solution Nobody can – the best you can hope for is about 47K under normal conditions. If your connection speed is definitely too low, however, make sure you're connecting to the right phone number, as many ISPs operate different numbers for different modem standards.

Problem Your modem has just stopped working.

Solution Have you installed any other hardware recently, or changed your modem's drivers? If you've upgraded the drivers, try changing back to the old ones and see if that helps; if it doesn't, use the standard Windows modem driver. If you've installed some new hardware recently, check to see that it's not causing a conflict; try taking the new hardware out and see if that solves the problem.

Problem The connection drops.

Solution Any number of things can cause this, the most likely being official ISP-instigated line-drops at two or four hours to stop people hogging dial-in ports. Line noise is also a common problem – if your modem is running on an extension off the main socket check that nobody's picking up the phone. You might also ask BT to crank up your phone line's 'gain'.

N IS FOR NEWSGROUPS

The Internet is more than just the World Wide Web; newsgroups are an extremely popular part of it – there are about 100,000 in all, swapping all kinds of stories, chat and info. Sadly the newsgroups are also commonly used to distribute pirated warez or pornography (including child porn). So if you can't find a »

GRAPHICS

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All Your Music. Wherever You Go.

particular newsgroup on your ISP's lists, maybe its contents were deemed to be of an offensive or illegal nature and it's been blocked.

O IS FOR 0845

Cast your mind back but one short year and you'll find that the overwhelming majority of people connected to the Internet on a per-minute 0845-style number. That all changed earlier this year as the first of the freephone 0800 ISPs hit the market. However there are still quite a few ISPs about offering confusingly named 'free' dial-ups, which utilise the old 0845 payment model. So before signing up with an ISP make sure that you're actually getting an 0800-style dial-up. Free doesn't always mean free.

P IS FOR PASSWORD

Despite the best efforts of ISPs, people still tend to choose very obvious passwords – a loved one's name, a pet's name, birthplace, date of birth, '1234', 'god', 'money' and 'sex' are all commonly used. They're also commonly guessed, especially by someone who knows you. However it's a double-edged sword – if you're conscientious and use different passwords every time you're asked for one it's really easy to forget them. So to save having to ask your ISP for a reminder, get hold of an application like Password Tracker (from ***www.download.com***) which will insert passwords for you when requested and is very secure itself.

Q IS FOR QUALITY SERVICE

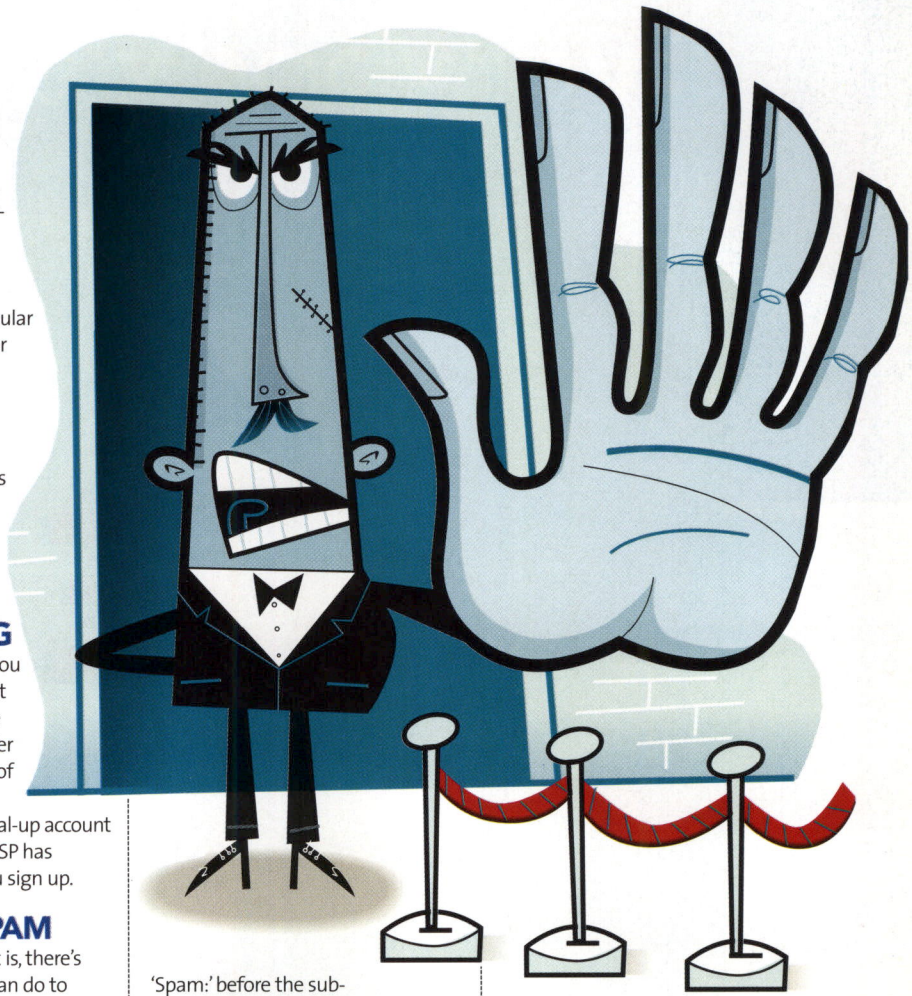
There are just as many potential cowboys operating in the ISP market as anywhere else. So before you spend your hard-earned on a particular company, check the user forums at ISP Review (***www.ispreview.co.uk***) and Net For Nowt (***www.net4nowt.com***) to see what actual users have to say about the quality of service being offered by the ISP.

R IS FOR ROAMING

The larger ISPs enable you to dial into your account wherever you are in the world, because they offer worldwide local Points of Presence (POPs). So if you want to use your dial-up account abroad, make sure the ISP has foreign POPs before you sign up.

S IS FOR SPAM

As irritating as it is, there's not a lot that the ISPs can do to stop the proliferation of unsolicited emails, better known as spam. Some of them have made efforts to keep it in check; Microsoft's MSN dial-up, for instance, offers an Inbox Guardian facility which tags email from known spammers with the word 'Spam:' before the subject, enabling you to filter them out. However, if you receive a spam email in your inbox, it's not the ISP's fault, so don't bother contacting them if you're bothered about it. Get hold of a program like SpamKiller (***www.spamkiller.com***) which will filter out the majority of this rubbish for you instead.



T IS FOR TIME

Depending on the ISP and the time of the day you may have problems connecting via dial-up. »

AVOID THE PHONELINES WITH THE BEST FREE ONLINE HELP AVAILABLE

HELP ME IF YOU CAN, MY EMAIL'S DOWN... »

Don't fancy paying 50p per minute to speak to a technical support person who you appear to have just roused from a coma? The answer to your problem can usually be found online. So assuming you can still connect (and if not, you could always nip down the nearest cybercafé or public library), here are some free sources of help.

Whether or not you're a Demon subscriber, you'll find their help pages very useful: point your browser at ***www.demon.net/helpdesk*** and peruse the sections on dial-ups, FTP, Email and Web browsers – do avoid the Demon-specific bits, though. For a neat and very clear guide to creating a new dial-up connection, check out Easycall's guide at ***www.easycall.com.ph/online_help/connection/windun.html***.

For a range of tutorials and guides written in a friendly style have a look at Cnet's help site (***www.help.com***) and click on the Internet sub-heading. Everything from online chat to the TCP/IP is explained.

For more help with a similar feel, have a look at the easy-to-read, easy-to-understand ZDnet range. We particularly liked the ZDnet email quick-start guide, which can be searched for at ***www.zdnet.com/zdhelp***.

Over at Help2Go (***www.help2go.com***) there is a range of help sections covering the basics through to troubleshooting your email client. It's well worth a look. For an excellent overview of email and the Internet (and indeed much more besides) check out the marvellous How Stuff Works at ***www.howstuffworks.com***.

How Stuff Works: explains it all eloquently

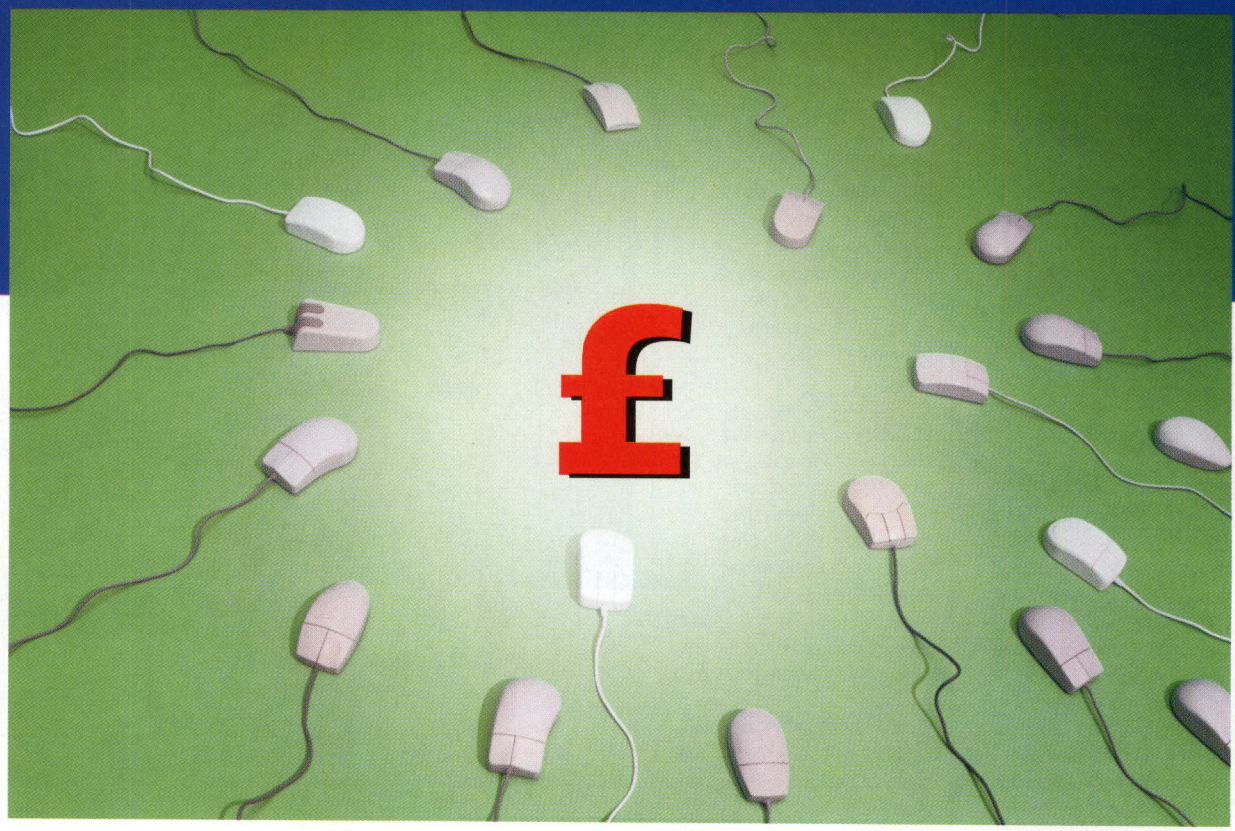
In the main article we highlight the problem of spam, and several sites offer help and guidance for removing as much of this digital detritus from your inbox as possible.

We particularly liked eHow's guide (***www.ehow.com/eHow/eHow/0,1053,2877,00.html***). If it's the terminology that you're having trouble getting to grips with, consult the Acronym Finder at ***www.acronymfinder.com*** or the excellent Whatis site (***www.whatis.com***).

If you've got newsgroup access then the groups to check out are ***comp.answers***, ***alt.internet.providers.uk***, ***alt.internet.access***, ***alt.comp.mail.misc***, ***comp.infosystems.www.browsers.ms-windows***, ***comp.infosystems.www.authoring.html*** and ***comp.sys.ibm.hardware*** among many others.

For a full list of all the newsgroups relevant to your problem – whatever it is – visit Harley Hahn's Master List at ***www.harley.com/usenet/*** or search your ISP's lists.

Everybody's Doing It.



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- 100 MB of Disk Space
- 3000 MB Bandwidth per Month
- 20 POP E-mail Accounts
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This is a particular problem with the cheaper ISPs offering 0800 free-phone connections – they're typically over-subscribed and you'll have problems connecting at peak times such as between 6pm and 9pm. If you want a no-frills freephone dial-up that connects at such peak times then your best bet is one of the very large ISPs like AOL or BTinternet.

U IS FOR URL

The one rule about using URLs is that you have to use precisely the right lettering. So if you can't access a Web page make doubly sure you've typed everything in correctly. If it's a secure Web site it'll start with HTTPS rather than just HTTP. If it uses strange squiggles make sure you're using the right one. Also, don't assume that every site you visit will be .com or .co.uk – there are plenty of other domain suffixes out there these days including .net, .org, .tv, .bus and .to.

V IS FOR VIRUS

Originally spread via floppy disk, these days you're far more likely to encounter a virus via the Internet. If you do get one it's worth remembering that it's not your ISP's fault (unless, of course, they sent you a virus-infected email) and that there's not a lot they can do to help you. If you were sensible enough to install some anti-virus software then simply do a full system scan and let the program weed out the virus. If you don't have any anti-virus software then immediately buy a package like Norton AntiVirus or head to ***www.symantec.com/avcenter***. To prevent getting viruses in future never, ever open an email attachment unless it's been thoroughly scanned – and even then tread very carefully.

W IS FOR WEB SITE

Due to the problems involved in running a massive global network of computers and servers interconnected via a vast number of telecommunications routers, Web sites have been known to be unavailable. If you can't find a particular site, check to see if you can see any other Web sites. If it's just that one site then give it an hour or two and it'll probably be back up.

X IS FOR X-FILES

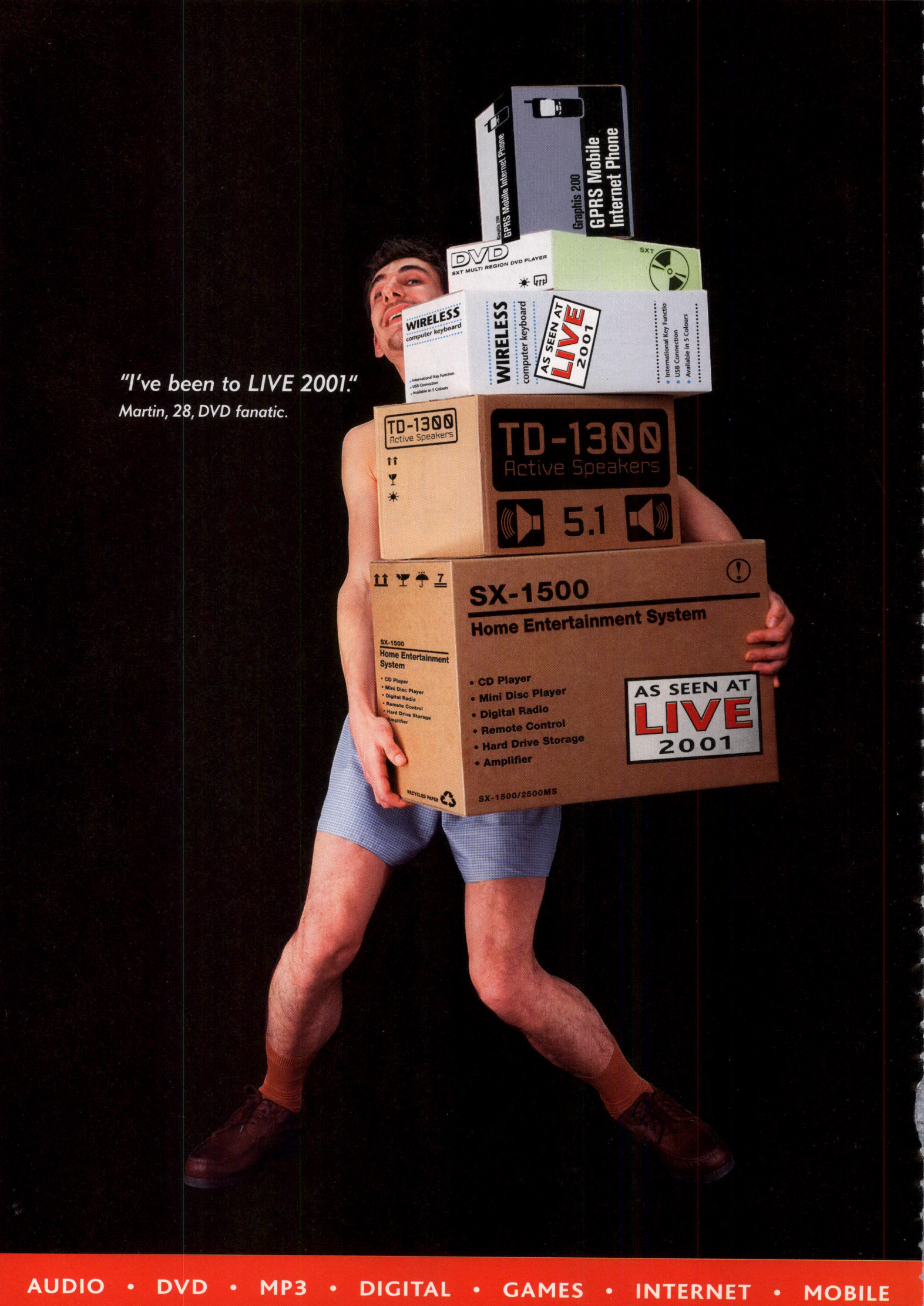
Email is not secure. Thanks to the Carnivore monitoring system (see p56) various American federal agencies have access to all the email that flows into and out of their country. If you're at all bothered about someone reading your correspondence then use a PGP encryption package such as PGP Freeware (***www.pgp.com***).

Y IS FOR YOU

There's an expression that beleaguered support staff have been known to utter when dealing with difficult customers, which forms the acronym PEBKAC, or Problem Exists Between Keyboard And Chair. With all the best will in the world it's often the end users and not the ISPs who are at fault and if you have problems understanding the Internet and Net access then perhaps it's about time you booked yourself onto a course. Don't expect your ISP to have to explain the ins and outs of Internet access: it's their job to provide you with dial-up access, not tuition.

Z IS FOR ZZZZ

Your ISP cannot be held responsible for your lack of sleep. If you're online every hour you're not at work then perhaps it's time to ask yourself some hard questions. Is your social life suffering because you're always online? Can you remember what your partner looks like? Does your phone bill have 16 pages, all of which feature the same number over and over? It's easy to overdose. The Net will still be there when you get back from the pub...


"I've been to LIVE 2001."
Martin, 28, DVD fanatic.
Graphis 200
GPRS Mobile Internet Phone
DVD
SXT MULTI REGION DVD PLAYER
SXT
WIRELESS
computer keyboard
AS SEEN AT LIVE 2001
International Key Functio
USB Connection
Available in 5 Colours
TD-1300
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5.1
SX-1500
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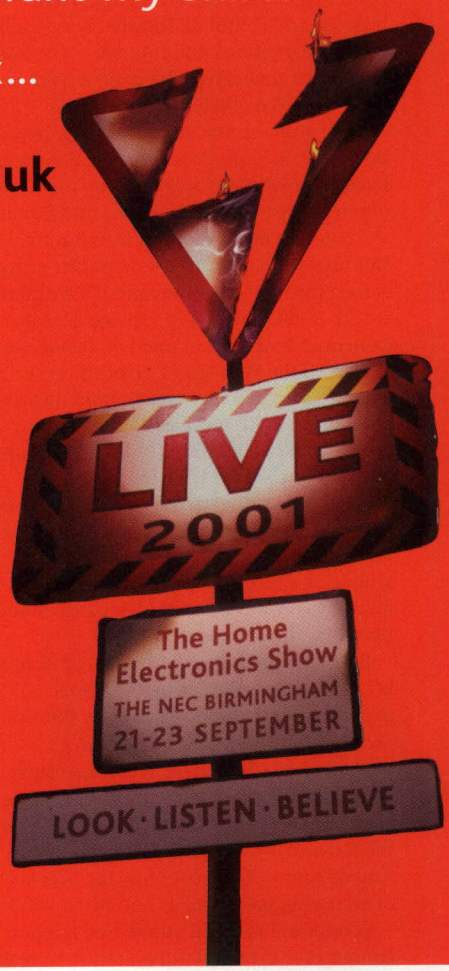

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THE UK'S BIGGEST TECHNOLOGY AND HOME ENTERTAINMENT SHOW.
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Wireless shootout

You want to grab mail and see the Web on the go. But which is the best option?

ALRIGHT, ALRIGHT, WE KNOW THAT 3G is coming. Or not, depending on which national newspaper's business section you read. Either way, the emerging promise of broadband 3G mobile Internet services has fired imaginations and interest – not least in today's kit that can grab email or Web pages clear from the ether.

Such stuff, as you've probably gathered, is by no means pipe-dream material. You may have tried WAP through a diddy mobile phone, only to find it tiresome and irritating. We couldn't agree more: it *is* irritating. But introduce a handheld organiser's larger screen into the equation, and it's a different world. Suddenly, you're viewing a proper, grown-up email client and whole pages of text from the Web (in place of the three lines of puffed-up text message offered by last-generation WAP mobiles).

The latest generations of handhelds are now being shipped with Internet connectivity software built in: all they need is the modem to fire them into life. And as you're about to discover, that can be as simple as a snap-on expansion pack, or alternatively a compatible, separate mobile phone as the connector.

Be clear: even the best handheld or mobile is incapable of replicating the visual experience of a desktop browser. But there are sites out there that just beg to go portable (we're thinking of services such as ***www.toptable.co.uk***, the restaurant booking service), and at last we're beginning to have the technology to exploit their potential. And of course, for most of us the prospect of accessing your mail as and when you wish – as opposed to when you're tied to your computer – is too mouth-watering to resist.

MOTOROLA TIMEPORT 260 GPRS

£199 (ON BT CELLNET TARIFF)

★★★☆☆

PROS Always-on Net connection; relatively compact, one-box unit
CONS Small screen limits text view; keypad limits text input

Finally, a working, fully-connected GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) mobile phone. It gives a pretty much instantaneous connection, but your view of the 260 will depend on your use of the Net. For quick news and short messages, it's heaven. But if you want to read mail or pages at leisure, the small screen will irk; it supports four lines of scrollable text in a not-particularly-handsome font, and the keypad has its limits when writing mail of any substance (even with T9 predictive text). The BT Cellnet connection took an average of 20-25 seconds to find the Genie home page; from there, pages took 3-4 seconds to load – as snappy as you'd expect given the three-slot phone's upload/download speeds of 30/10kbps. GPRS is quick, and the T260 is a compact, stylish means of accessing it. But if it were our cash, we'd wait for Motorola's mobile/PDA Accompli 008, out any day now.

SIZE 130 x 47 x 24mm
WEIGHT 108g
SPEED 'Up to 30kbps'
OPERATING FREQUENCY GSM 900/1800/1900 MHz

PALM m505 + NOKIA 8890

£399 (m505), £540 (8890 WITHOUT TARIFF)

★★★★☆

PROS As a solution, works if you have any Palm already; expandable; compact; adaptable
CONS Two devices to haul around; pricey

Palm and PocketPC owners unable to stomach the switch to Web and mail on a mobile with a diddy screen might have to invest in a mobile with a built-in modem that will talk to their current device. Hence Palm shipping the new m505 colour handheld with a Mobile Internet Kit – aim the suitably equipped 505 at a compatible mobile (see the list at ***www.palm.com/europe***) with a data-enabled SIM, and you can grab POP or IMAP mail and sync with AvantGo's Web channel. Yes, you're carrying two things, but the Palm fits any shirt pocket and the Nokia fits any trouser pocket. The only hassles are setting up network preferences (but the m505 can replicate the phone settings) and aligning the two so that they communicate (again, not difficult). And the Palm's screen is small by comparison with the Visor Prism. But then it is compact, and boasts great battery life.

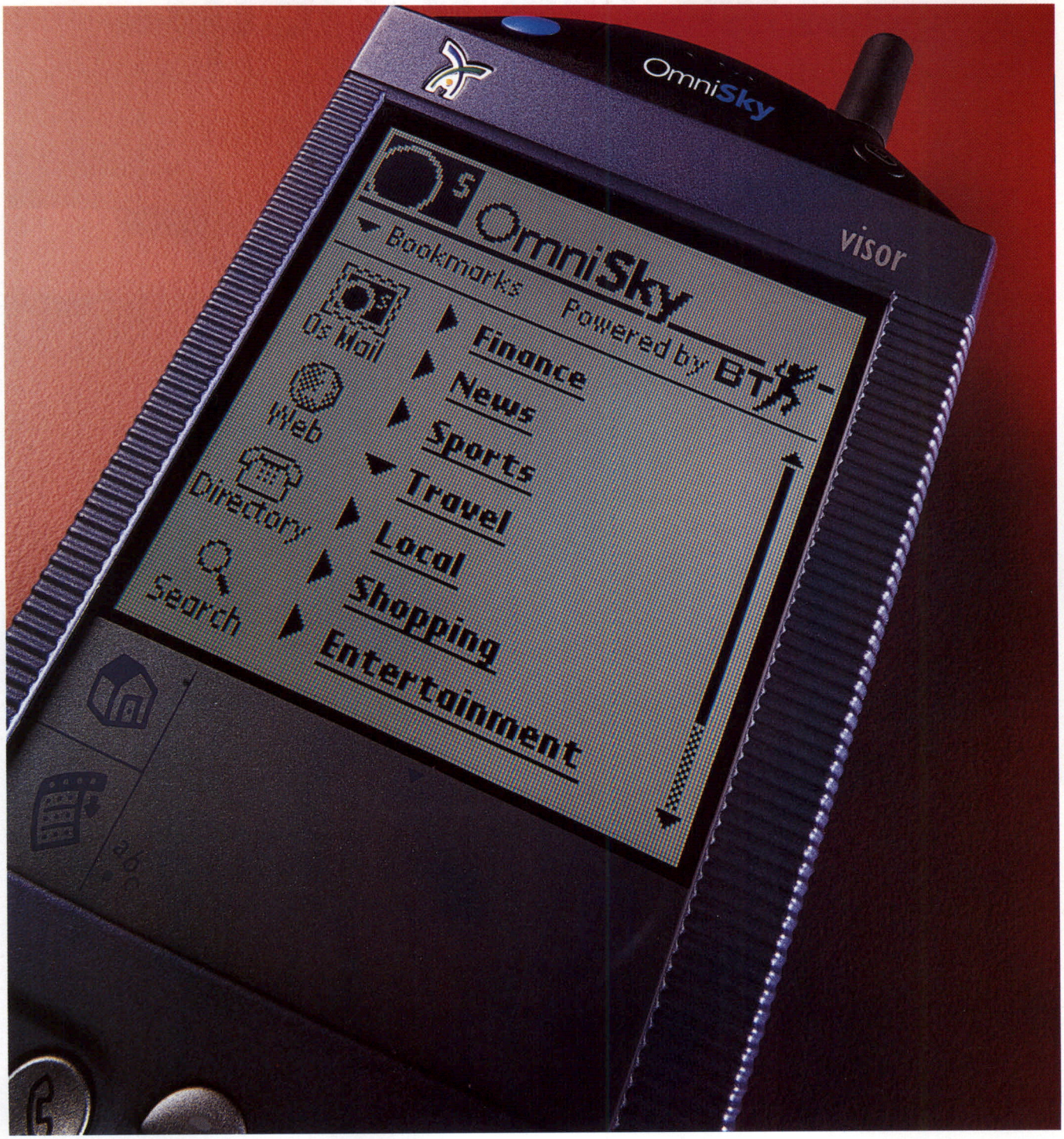
SIZE Nokia 100 x 44 x 18mm, Palm 114 x 79 x 13mm
WEIGHT 91g (Nokia), 125g (Palm)
SPEED 'Up to 9.6kbps'
OPERATING FREQUENCY GSM 900/1900MHz

WORDS: MARK PAYTON; PICTURES: NICK WRIGHT

First we helped you listen...

WHAT HI-FI?

Britain's No.1 hi-fi magazine for 25 years



HANDSPRING VISOR PRISM + VISORPHONE + OMNISKY

£468 (BETA PACKAGE WITH THREE MONTHS' FREE DATA AIRTIME)

★★★★☆

PROS Vivid colour screen; one-box combo; excellent OmniSky interface
CONS Bulky; eats power; beta version suffered glitches and resets

It may be hefty by comparison with the Palm/Ubinetics combo (see over page), but the Handspring/OmniSky package brings two considerable benefits to the party – live Internet and colour. Not that we're skirting the bulk issue: while the Palm/GA will stretch a pocket, the Visor/OmniSky will bust the stitching. That may be a hurdle you're unwilling to jump. But if you are, you get a single unit running Palm OS that offers a first-rate Web portal (including news, finance and entertainment) and a well-organised email client. Network reception during our tests was fast and reliable, although our unit was plagued by software glitches and even forced resets (it must be said that it *was* a beta test unit). And yes, there is a wait whilethe modem sends and receives. But it's hardly painful, and the results through the Prism's large, colourful screen are attractive. Setting up accounts through OmniSky's email client is easy enough, and once done, the system connects, collects and shuts down for you. Problems? The aforementioned resets and glitches, apparently a result of the Palm OS not always recognising the VisorPhone attachment. Then there's size – though we hear that a Palm Vx version with snap-on modem is due in the very near future. In its favour, this combo offers a simple, intuitive interface and a screen that brings images to life.

SIZE Prism 120 x 75 x 21mm, VisorPhone 60 x 50 x 13mm
WEIGHT 194g (Prism), 83g (Visorphone)
SPEED 'Up to 14.4kbps'
OPERATING FREQUENCY GSM 900/1900MHz

Now we'll help you see.

With the July issue, on sale now, the nation's best-selling hi-fi magazine gets vision. So if you're looking to for the complete hi-fi and home entertainment solution, there's now only one answer: us.

WHAT HI-FI?
SOUND AND VISION

Now Britain's No.1 hi-fi and home entertainment magazine

PALM VX + UBINETICS GA100 MODEM

MRRP £229 (VX), £200 (GA100), £407 AS A PACKAGE

★★★★☆

PROS One-box combination; intuitive use
CONS Still a bit bulky; poor reception during tests

So here it is, one box that does it all. Well, sort of. In theory, the 8Mb Palm Vx/Ubinetics should be the dream device: a screen large enough to display readable text (be it email or Web clippings) with a GSM modem strapped to its back. And then there's the acreage of Palm functionality – a whopping address book, diary and a million and one other PIM functions that can be downloaded from the Web at will. The reality is a combination that's a little too bulky for the average shirt pocket, and that can only be used with an earpiece (the GA100 has no built-in mic). We also found that network connection was less than 100 percent reliable (and yes, we did try a variety of networks). That said, once your network connection is in decent order, collecting mail was the work of seconds (we used our favourite Palm mail client, MultiMail Pro), and syncing with our AvantGo account was quick and easy: unlike OmniSky, AvantGo is not a 'live' wireless service – you collect your chosen channels in one bunch from their servers. There is the option of going live by downloading a browser. The GA100 phone interface is also well integrated with the address book (write in a name, and up it pops). We just wish that the GA100 didn't compromise the dinky Palm quite so much. As a way to grab mail and see the Web, it's fine – but as a phone, most people will find it too much of a hassle.

SIZE Palm 115x78x 12mm GA100 85 x 160 x 20mm
WEIGHT 100g (GA100), 114g (Vx)
SPEED 'Up to 14.4kbps'
OPERATING FREQUENCY GSM 900/1800MHz

DAVID MOTTON; PICTURES: STEVE ORINO

MOTOR ON A MODEM

Even if you'd rather not shell out £10,000-plus on the Web, you'd be mad not to surf before you buy a new car

We all know the type. Shoes polished to a military shine, slicked-back hair and a sharp suit. The aroma of slightly too much aftershave hangs thick in the air as he grins a grin as wide as the Cheddar Gorge. Yes, he's a car salesman, and his glassy gaze looks clean through you and straight at his next sales bonus.

This clichéd portrait may often be wide of the mark, but a trip to the lion's den that is the car showroom is not something everyone relishes. The jargon, the blarney and the pressure of dealing with someone who cuts deals for a living can make buying a car more of an ordeal than it should be.

Enter the Web: it's frequently hailed as the perfect way to sidestep Swiss Toni. Whether you're looking to buy a UK car or an import, cyberspace is crammed with sites offering to sell without ever setting foot in a showroom; in some cases, you can even buy direct from the car makers themselves.

While it's become clear over the past couple of years that we're still some way off the days when we write off thousands with the click of a mouse, that's not to say the online motor market isn't thriving. Even those manufacturers who aren't geared up for online car sales have long since wised up to the power of the Net as a soft-sell marketing tool. Most car makers' sites offer far more than just an online price list and a few grainy Jpegs: surfers can specify options, view their chosen car in a variety of colours, check out finance offers and more.

And there's more to motoring on the Web than the virtual showroom. That low-rate personal loan or keen insurance deal can be just a few mouse clicks away, too: whichever way you look at it, buying a new car without the Web is, if not impossible, then at the very least extremely inadvisable.

Buying a new car without using the Web is at the very least inadvisable

WHERE TO BUY A CAR

The best manufacturer Web sites can be all-singing, all-dancing affairs, but if you want one which will sell you a new car lock, stock and barrel, then the choice narrows down to just three destinations: Ford, Smart and Vauxhall.

Ford set up its own dedicated car buying site, ***www.fordjourney.com***, last October. The model line-up isn't complete, but you can order a car from the Ka, Fiesta, Puma, Focus, Mondeo and Galaxy ranges. You can add options online and choose your preferred combination of colour and trim before arriving at a final price.

The site is slick, good looking and logical to use, guiding visitors smoothly through the buying process. However, it does have its limitations – for one thing, Ford stops short of delivering a car direct to your door. Instead, buyers collect their car from a dealer, and if you want to part-exchange your current car, you'll have to liaise with a dealer, too.

The Smart site, ***www.thesmart.co.uk***, allows buyers of the tiny two-seat city car to go further. The process of choosing a precise model, colour, trim and specification works in much the same way as with Ford, but Smart buyers can choose to pay over the Net by credit or debit card via a secure server. They can pick up their Smart from their nearest dealer, or pay £250 for home delivery.

Since the Smart site went live last November, around 60 buyers have done just that from the comfort of their living room. But as Smart's sales staff use the same Web pages, even those who bought from a showroom will have seen the various models, colours and options, and even placed their order using the site. So in a way, all the 1200 or so Smarts sold since official imports began last autumn have been sold over the Internet.

As a new arrival on the UK motoring scene, Smart may be going for the Web in a big way. But old hand Vauxhall has been using the Internet far longer, launching a site in 1995, and it's still at the sharp-end of manufacturer sites now.

Vauxhall beat arch rival Ford to the draw by starting its on online sales in November 1999. Kicking off with a range of Internet-only '.com' special editions: the full range of models has been available since November last year. Unlike Ford's »

service, Vauxhall (***www.vauxhall.co.uk***) allows buyers to value a part-exchange online, though this must be confirmed with a dealer. And while the car is supplied through Vauxhall's regular dealer network, it can be delivered to your door.

Impressive though these sites are, they share one big disadvantage: price. Yes, car buyers might look to the Internet as a hassle-free way to pick up a car, but after all the controversy surrounding UK car prices, we'd all like to save a bundle on the sticker price as well.

Disappointingly, Smarts are priced identically whether you buy over the Net or face to face. A Ford Focus 1.6 Zetec five-door will be yours for around £850 less than the list price if you buy online, while a similar Vauxhall Astra is £340 cheaper on the Net than in the showroom. Both savings are worthwhile, but it wouldn't take Quentin Willson's powers of negotiation to match or beat these deals in the showroom.

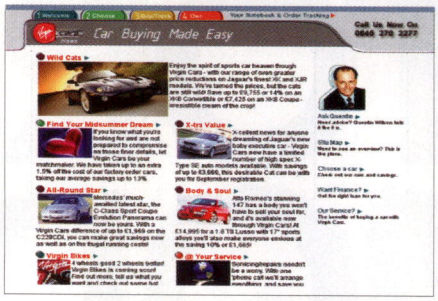
HOME OR ABROAD?

If you really want an online bargain, you'll need to widen your search to the world of independent online car retailers. The first thing to consider is whether to go for a discounted car from within the UK or a European import.

Sites which find their cars within Britain use their buying power to secure big discounts: in effect, they negotiate with the dealer so you don't have to. Even the most hardened haggler would struggle to match some of the savings.

Import sites also cut keen deals with their foreign suppliers. In theory, the lower pre-tax prices elsewhere in Europe should make for even greater savings. But this isn't always the case.

The pub bore will tell you that imports are thousands of pounds cheaper than buying in Britain and that anyone who doesn't shop in Europe is a mug. That's certainly not true now, if it



The Net is a hassle-free way to buy a car, but we'd all like to save on the sticker price as well

ever was. A year or so ago there was clear daylight between the price of an import and even the best UK deals, but exchange rate fluctuations and UK price cuts mean that gap has closed dramatically.

There are other pros and cons to weigh up. British cars now typically come with a three-year, 60,000-mile warranty; cars bought on the Continent are usually supplied with one year's unlimited mileage cover. You can arrange extended cover on an import, but this could cost extra.

You'll probably have to wait longer for your car if you go the import route, too. Delivery times of around three months are typical, but waiting as long as 12 months for a sought-after model is not unheard of. As a rule of thumb, the more expensive the car, the greater the saving by buying abroad. But the only way to really be sure of the best deal is to find several sites for both UK cars and imports, and get clicking.

Either way, there are some intriguing David and Goliath battles in cyberspace. Take UK suppliers: sites like ***www.drivethedeal.com*** and ***www.broker4cars.co.uk*** go head to head with heavily-advertised companies such as ***www.jamjar.com*** and ***www.autobytel.co.uk***.

Ignore the little guys at your peril. Their design might not win any online beauty contests, and the range of add-on services may not be quite so comprehensive, but prices often undercut the better-known names. DrivetheDeal, in particular, combines a simple, uncluttered layout with some keen deals. The same is true in the world of imports. You're more likely to have heard of Virgin Cars (***www.virgincars.com***) than Alliance Car Imports (***www.alliancecarimports.co.uk***), but the lesser-known ACI has been importing for longer and will often beat Branson and friends on price.

Look out, too, for firms which offer a wide range of extra services above and beyond simple car retail. Lots of sites have handy links to insurance companies, loan providers and warranty suppliers. Also, expect help and advice at the end of a phone: Virgin Cars reckons 90 percent of its customers ring the company at some point or other in the car buying process.

Buyers looking for a one-stop-shop car buying experience should log on to OneSwoop (***www.oneswoop.com***). Although the company imports most of its cars from Europe, door-to-door delivery is included, and prices are fixed against exchange-rate fluctuations. Unlike most competitors, all OneSwoop's cars come with a three-year warranty, and there's a facility to part-exchange your old car. It's also possible to apply for a loan or car insurance online. In fact, signing the contract and sending a copy of your passport are the only times you should need to resort to snail mail in the whole buying process.

Virgin Cars offers many of the same services, but the after-sales package goes further. Every new car comes with three years' membership of the @ Your Service scheme. If servicing or repair work is needed, Virgin will phone around to find a competitive price, collect your car and return it once the work has been carried out.

IS MY MONEY SAFE?

It's one thing ordering a £15 book at Amazon or a DVD from Blackstar. But buying a £15,000 car over the Net is an entirely different matter.

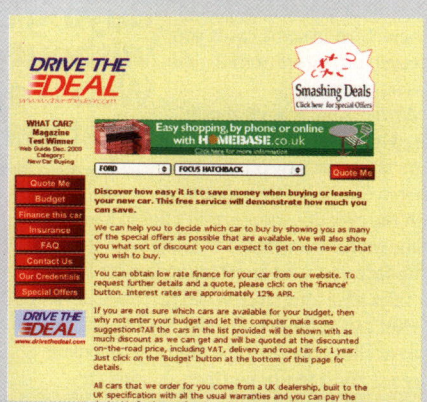
It pays to check out a company thoroughly before parting with your cash. Ask to be put in touch with satisfied customers or the firm's bank manager. Checking that the outfit is registered with Companies House is a smart move, as is a call to the firm's local Trading Standards office (see ***www.tradingstandards.gov.uk***) to see if there have been any complaints against the company.

When it comes to actually handing over your cash, be sure your cash is paid direct to the supplying dealer. Alternatively you could insist that your money is paid into a holding account until the car arrives. Paying by credit card can give added protection, but only if you're sure all details are transferred over a secure server.

When it comes to spending this kind of money with a company you've found over the Web, put peace of mind at the top of your shopping list. If anything does go wrong, get in touch with Trading Standards at the address above to put pressure on the dealer to sort the matter out. Alternatively, you could try emailing the What Car helpline at ***wchelpline@haynet.com***. »

THE DEALER vs THE NET

We compared the details of a Ford Focus 1.6 Zetec 5dr to see how showrooms match up to the Web


DRIVE THE DEAL
Smashing Deals
Easy shopping by phone or online with HOMEBASE.co.uk
FORD
FOCUS HATCHBACK
Quote Me
Quote Me
Budget
Finance this car
Insurance
FAQ
Contact Us
Our Credentials
Special Offers
Discover how easy it is to save money when buying or leasing your new car. This free service will demonstrate how much you can save.
We can help you to decide which car to buy by showing you as many of the special offers as possible that are available. We will also show you what sort of discount you can expect to get on the new car that you wish to buy.
You can obtain low rate finance for your car from our website. To request further details and a quote, please click on the 'finance' button. Interest rates are approximately 12% APR.
If you are not sure which cars are available for your budget, then why not enter your budget and let the computer make some suggestions? All the cars in the list provided will be shown with as much discount as we can get and will be quoted at the discounted on-the-road price, including VAT, delivery and road tax for 1 year. Just click on the 'Budget' button at the bottom of this page for details.
All cars that we order for you come from a UK dealership, built to the UK specification with all the usual warranties and you can pay the

	DEALER	NET
PRICE	£11,980 list price, negotiable at a dealer	Available for £10,712 at ***www.drivethedeal.com***
PART EXCHANGE	Available at all Ford dealers	Only OneSwoop and Virgin Cars offer part exchange
SPECIFICATION	Negotiable at dealer	Many sites ask for cash up front before you change the spec
DELIVERY	Most dealers will have the car you want, but sites sourcing a Focus abroad state an average waiting time of eight weeks	Waiting time of 16 weeks

THE SITES EVERY CAR BUYER SHOULD SEE

FORD

www.ford.co.uk ★★★★☆

A flashy-looking site, but easy to navigate and comprehensive.

HONDA

www.honda.co.uk ★★★★☆

A good example of a site designed for used car buyers as well as new.

PEUGEOT

www.peugeot.co.uk ★★★★★

The best manufacturer site for depth, features and ease of use.

SMART

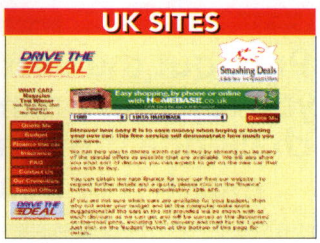
www.smart.co.uk ★★★★☆

This perky site complements the cars. Buy online with a credit card.

VAUXHALL

www.vauxhall.co.uk ★★★★☆

A little fussy-looking , but simple to use and allows online purchases.



DRIVETHEDEAL

www.drivethedeal.com ★★★★☆

Uncluttered design makes this easy to use and the prices are keen.

GB CARS

www.broker4cars.co.uk ★★★☆☆

Not always easy to find the car you want quickly, but prices are good.

JAMJAR

www.jamjar.com ★★★★☆

Offers UK cars and imports: UK section has the biggest choice.

TINS

www.tins.co.uk ★★★☆☆

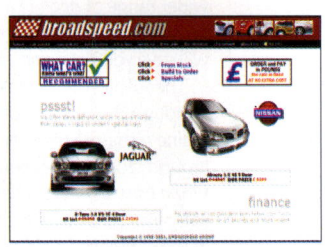
Wide range of cars with a choice of finance options.

ALLIANCE CAR IMPORTS

www.alliancecarimports.co.uk

★★★★☆

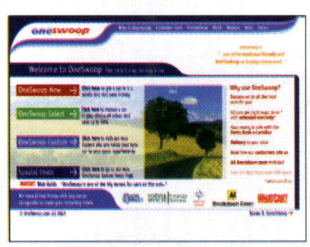
Strong prices and a wide range.



BROADSPEED

www.broadspeed.com ★★★★☆

Great prices, lots of choice and plenty of extra services.



ONESWOOP

www.oneswoop.com ★★★★★

Razor-sharp prices and an excellent range of add-on services.

VIRGIN CARS

www.virgincars.com ★★★★☆

An excellent range of services: not the cheapest, though

WHAT CAR?

www.whatcar.com ★★★★☆

All you need to help choose your next car, with a used car database.

AUTOTRADER

www.autotrader.co.uk ★★★★☆

Easy to use and comprehensive database of used cars for sale.

FISH4CARS

www.fish4cars.co.uk ★★★☆☆

Glossy-looking and simple to use, but Autotrader is more in-depth.

MONEY SUPERMARKET

www.moneysupermarket.co.uk

★★★★★

The easiest way to find a loan.

TESCO

www.tesco.com/finance ★★★★☆

Cheerful, colourful design and competitive loan rates.

AXA

www.axamotor.co.uk ★★★★☆

Competitive quotes combined with useful advice sections.

DIRECT LINE

www.directline.com ★★★★☆

Easy to use with a simple online quotation process.

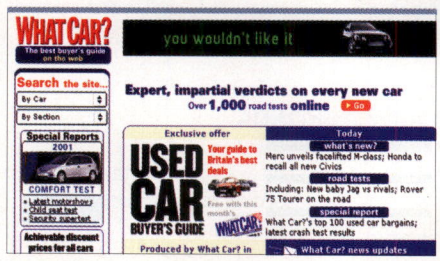
IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE CASH

In spite of the savings and services on offer, most visitors to motoring sites aren't planning to do their buying on the Web at all. According to online motoring site Autohit.com, three quarters of Net-using car buyers research their purchase online but head for a bricks-and-mortar dealership when it's time to sign on the dotted line. And why not? The more relevant information you've found on the Web before you head for the showroom, the easier the experience will be; chances are you'll track down a keener deal, too.

Milk the manufacturer's Web pages for all they're worth. Get some idea which model will best suit you, the colours you like and the options you want before you speak to a salesman. Check out any finance rates and special offers, too. That way you'll know if the salesman isn't offering you anything he should be.

As with all spheres of life, forewarned is forearmed; Swiss Toni is less likely to railroad you into a bum deal if he knows you've got the savvy to buy online. He might even try to undercut any deals you've been offered so far. So before you set out to strike a deal, take another look at the online retailers and print off the best price you can find. Challenge the salesman to match the deal. If he won't at least get close, walk away.

It's not just new car buyers who will benefit from time online, either. The Net's geared up to help those tracking down used cars as well. The majority of manufacturer sites have an Approved Used stock locator. Enter details of where you live and what you're looking for and the site will list suitable buys and the best local dealers. Many sites offer the facility to email the dealership to register your interest.


WHAT CAR?
you wouldn't like it
Search the site...
Expert, impartial verdicts on every new car
Over 1,000 road tests online
Special Reports 2001
COMFORT TEST
Exclusive offer
Today
what's new?
road tests
special report
USED CAR BUYER'S GUIDE
Your guide to Britain's best deals
Merc unveils facelifted M-class; Honda to recall all new Civics
Including: New baby Jag vs rivals; Rover 75 Tourer on the road
What Car?'s top 100 used car bargains; latest crash test results
Achievable discount prices for all cars
Produced by What Car? in
What Car? news updates

Print out the best price you can find online and challenge the dealer to match it or beat it

To find a second-hand bargain, try sites like ***www.autotrader.co.uk***, ***www.fish4cars.co.uk***, ***www.fsmotorist.co.uk*** and ***www.whatcar.com***. All have searchable databases of used cars. You'll have to hit the phone far earlier than you would with new car sites, but you'll already have saved a lot of time and effort, and best of all you'll be able to compare prices across a wider range of dealers and areas than you would anywhere else. Utilising email and search facilities will save you time and cash.

The future, meanwhile, can only get better – although the number of motorists actually buying online remains small. Vauxhall reckons it sells around 1200 cars per year over the Net, while Virgin Cars says it has delivered just under 4000 cars since its launch last spring. Set those figures in the context of a UK new car market of around 2.2 million per year, and you can see that it's not time for the traditional dealer to put away his Brylcreem just yet.

It'll take a sea-change in attitudes to the Web before handing over your credit card details to a computer for one of the biggest financial transactions of your life seems anything other than a little bit strange. But change is on the way. Block Exemption, the European regulation which governs the relationship between manufacturers and dealers, is up for renewal in September 2002. This same regulation prevents Internet retailers from buying direct from the manufacturers.

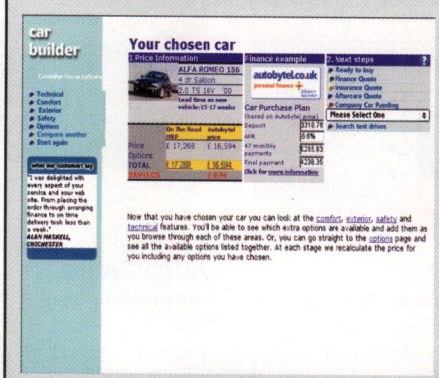
The European Union's competition commissioner, Mario Monti, has publicly expressed doubts that the present system is benefiting consumers as it should, so some fairly comprehensive change is widely expected within the next year or so.

Should this review allow Net companies to buy direct from car manufacturers – as it should if Signor Monti is to live up to his EU title – the reduced costs and greater competition could have a dramatic effect on prices. Virgin Cars chief executive Ian Lancaster believes we could eventually see cars for sale on the Web a full 10 percent cheaper than today: and when the savings are even greater and the process easier, even more of us will be tempted into trying our hand at picking up a bargain online.

Car buying on the Internet is already up and running. But just wait until it hits top gear.

UK vs IMPORT

How do the price and specifications of an Alfa Romeo 156 2.0 TS compare in the UK and abroad?



	UK	IMPORT
PRICE	Autobytel can offer a UK car from £16,594	OneSwoop will supply a Romeo from Europe for £14,663
DEPOSIT	JamJar.com asks for £150 to secure any UK car	OneSwoop requires 15 percent up front – a hefty £2000 on our model
SPECIFICATION	UK sites will readily supply a model to your specification	Check details with the site before you part with cash
WARRANTY	Three year, 60,000-mile warranty	Most cars will come with a one-year warranty, extendable at a premium
RESALE VALUE	Standard	Surveys suggest you could lose £500-1000 if dealers realise the car has been imported

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Who's watching you ONLINE?

Every click you make on the Web is being monitored by someone, somewhere – but what can you do about it?

'No one should be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks on his honour or reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interferences or attacks'
Article 12, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

'You already have zero privacy – get over it'
Scott McNealy, Chief Executive Officer, Sun Microsystems, March 1999

Laws designed to protect your privacy struggle to keep up with new technology

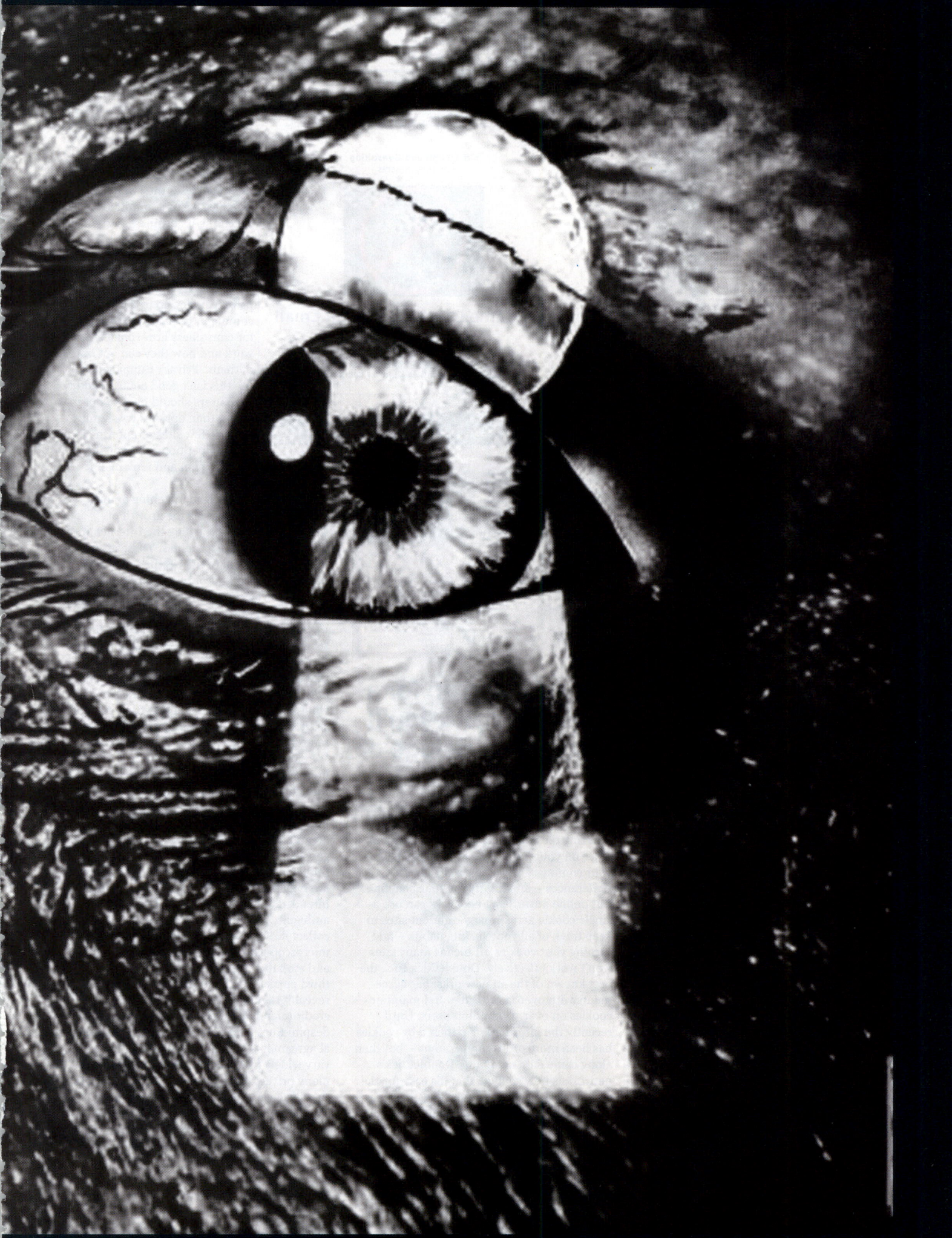
THEY KNOW WHERE you live, what you eat and all about your penchant for black silk underwear. Since the launch of Operation Shamrock in 1945, the US National Security Agency has been covertly intercepting international telecommunications on a routine basis. And Shamrock was just the beginning. Today, the Echelon system is able to intercept and listen to telecommunications anywhere in the world, according to a series of reports from the European Parliament. Little wonder then that after half-a-century of eavesdropping on our phone calls, the US intelligence community also wants to read our emails and record which Web sites we visit.

As early as 1995, the NSA is reported to have installed 'black boxes' in at least nine North American ISPs to sniff out traffic. Then in July last year, there was a public outcry when the FBI admitted to the existence of 'Carnivore', yet another system of 'black boxes' installed at ISPs, and said to be able to scan millions of emails per second while tracking all the Web surfing activity that passes through the servers. Given that most Internet traffic passes through US servers at some point on its journey, little of what we do on the Internet is entirely free from scrutiny. The potential for misuse of this power is greater than ever, but if the spooks don't worry you, then the suits ought to. The Internet is also a godsend to the marketing men, and companies have been quick to seize the opportunity to get to know you better. Privacy might not yet be dead, but it certainly requires round-the-clock intensive care.

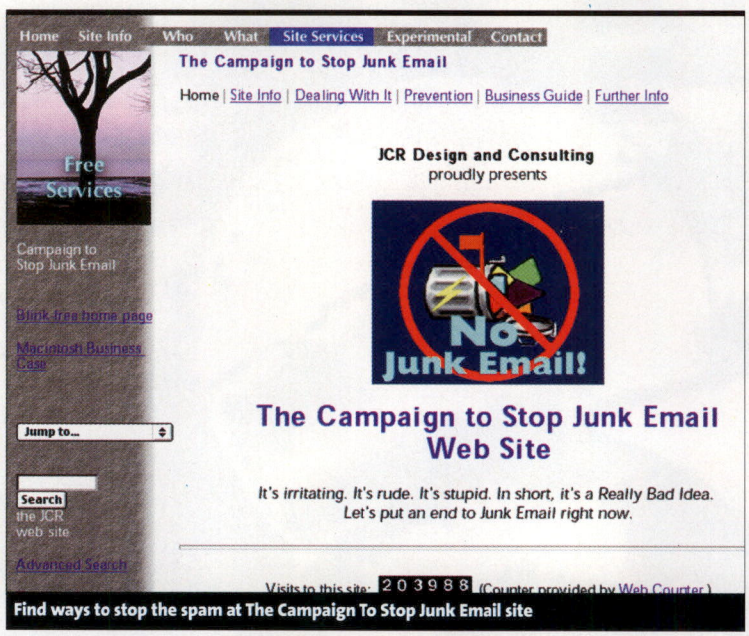
Privacy has become a commodity. Corporations buy it and sell it and take it from us when we are not looking; governments covet it for the sake of 'efficiency'. Laws designed to protect your privacy struggle to keep up with new technologies that can happily capture every detail of your life, store them, process them, retrieve them, and disseminate them like never before. Consider that an average home PC alone can store about half a million copies of this article. Well, the Defence Evaluation and Research Agency maintains a one Terabyte database on its computer systems containing the previous 90 days of Usenet messages. That's enough space to store a 200-page file with numerous colour photographs on every man, woman and child in the UK, all ready for analysing and cross-referencing at the touch of a button.

Your privacy is a fundamental human right. It is the hardest human right to define and probably the hardest to protect. Yet we care about it little, and are more often than »

WORDS: CHRIS HADLEY; PICTURES: KOBAL, GETTY IMAGES



not complicit in violating it. And yet, the right to be left alone is the human right most at threat in a democracy. 'You know, privacy is no joke,' says Simon Davies, director general of Privacy International. 'You need to look at the nature of privacy. It's a line in the sand between an authoritarian regime and a free society. It is a fundamental component of human rights, the right on which all other rights are built. It's difficult to have free speech if everything you say is monitored.' Davies knows that most people think they don't need to worry about privacy if they've nothing to hide. 'People don't worry about privacy while they're comfortably inside the bell curve, but it's too late to worry if you slip outside of it. If you don't value your privacy, well go on, put a loaded gun in the hands of a madman! Voluntarily give away your rights! Anyone who does that is a fool.'


Home
Site Info
Who
What
Site Services
Experimental
Contact
The Campaign to Stop Junk Email
Home | Site Info | Dealing With It | Prevention | Business Guide | Further Info
Free Services
Campaign to Stop Junk Email
Blink-free home page
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The Campaign to Stop Junk Email Web Site
It's irritating. It's rude. It's stupid. In short, it's a Really Bad Idea.
Let's put an end to Junk Email right now.
Visits to this site: 203988 (Counter provided by Web Counter)
Find ways to stop the spam at The Campaign To Stop Junk Email site

A RECENT SURVEY OF TOP WEB SITES for the US Federal Trade Commission found that over 90 per cent of them collected at least one personal identifying item such as an email address, name or postal address. Online profiling is undoubtedly the single most immediate threat the Internet poses to our privacy. Profiling is equivalent to a market researcher following you around, listening to your conversations, noting down your beliefs, observing how you spend your free time, what you read and what you buy. Much of this information is gathered by the online equivalent of market research surveys, often in the shape of site registration forms or masquerading as entries for competitions. And plenty of us fill them in. Companies have always gathered this kind of information, but the Internet allows them to do it cheaply, efficiently and on a much greater scale.

Some analysts have suggested that the market value of many dot coms has been based on their potential to build valuable customer databases which can then be sold to other companies. The result is spam – unsolicited junk mail from Mr Make-a-million-a-week and Miss Meet-beautiful-women. Some companies simply mine email addresses from messages posted on mailing lists, from newsgroups or from domain name registration data. Junk email filters are effective up to a point, but mostly you simply have to learn to live with spam or campaign to have it outlawed. The golden rule is never reply to it, since replying just confirms that your email address is valid. And if it really makes your blood boil check out the 'Stop Junk Email' Web site at ***www.jcrdesign.com/junkemail.html.***

Even if you are careful about who you directly hand your details to, the Internet has another card up its sleeve: the cookie,

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DoubleClick - the complete Internet advertising solution.
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DoubleClick What's Clicking
Click here to view our What's Clicking archive of presentations, as well as information on our next What's
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Interactive Relations
Employment Opportunities
Network Sites
Ad Rates
Manage Log In
Customer Support
Learning Center
On Privacy

Try signing up for a few sites and you'll soon see a deluge of junk mail

that tiny file which sites and their banners place on your hard drive to keep track of your comings and goings and your preferences – apparently for your benefit. But online advertising networks can use a single cookie across many different sites to keep track of all your surfing habits – and turning your cookies off means many sites won't work effectively. DoubleClick Inc., the best known of the ad networks, has agreements with over 11,000 sites and maintains cookies on over 100 million users. Until recently the information gathered by cookies has been more or less anonymous – but then along came data matching. DoubleClick's network is now so huge that it's easy for the company to match information gathered by cookies across several sites to information you type into a survey at another site. What's more, in 1999 DoubleClick bought Abacus, the owner of the largest direct marketing list in the United States. By combining its surfing records with Abacus's detailed personal profiles DoubleClick could control one of the most complete and invasive databases on private citizens ever held outside of government agencies. DoubleClick insists that its privacy policy is transparent to anyone who wants to read it, and that people can opt out of receiving their cookies if they want to. 'DoubleClick is committed to executing its business in the most open manner possible,' says Jules Polonetsky, the company's chief privacy officer. 'This extends from opening our privacy policy up to public comment, to clearly outlining for consumers how cookies work and how they can opt out of them.' Privacy campaigners say this isn't good enough, and Web users should have to opt in rather than opt out: try signing up for a few sites or entering a few competitions and you'll soon see a deluge of spam and junk mail if you don't tick a box.

A close second to data matching among the enemies of privacy is the growth of software capable of trawling the Internet and building detailed biographies. These are more of a problem in the US than over here, but it's only a matter of time. Online services like CyberDetective 2000 and NetDetective not only pull information from the Web and Usenet groups, but can also access social security numbers and car registration plates from government databases. Little wonder that identity theft is a growing problem. The only comparable UK system is 192.com, whose premium service allows you to reverse search the entire telephone directory cross-referenced with the entire electoral roll.

Policing all this data is growing increasingly difficult. The Office for the Information Commissioner regulates the Data Protection Act 1998 which gives individuals rights about the way information about them is used. The Act sets out what governments, companies and information brokers can do with the data – in theory they are only allowed to use it for its original intended purpose and there can be no ambiguity about that purpose when they collect it. But even if you tick the microscopic box at the bottom of the page, and stop them selling the information to third parties, the law still allows them to reveal it to other interested parties such as credit reference agencies. What's more, despite European directives and international agreements on data protection, standards vary widely from country to country, and many privacy advocates across Europe argue that it's currently illegal to transfer data to the US because of their lack of regulatory protection – but nobody takes that seriously.

Indeed, Microsoft would like to take things one step further: they are currently developing .Net, a data management system which would mean handing over large chunks of personal info (phone numbers, credit card details, itinerary, bookmarks) to »

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Are you a new user? Click here.
Statistics Central

Virtual Control Panel 2001

The Virtual Control Panel 2001 allows you to automatically control your website without any knowledge of programming!

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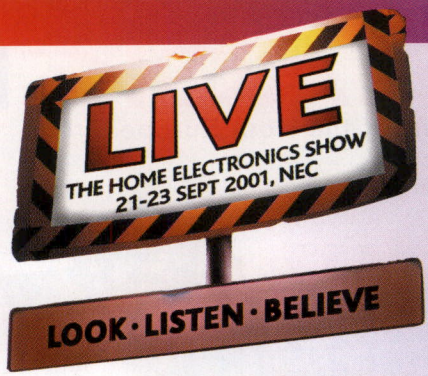

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the net has teamed up with **LIVE 2001** to offer its readers a fantastic ticket deal to the UK's biggest technology and home entertainment show.

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the net, Stuff and What Hi-Fi? Sound and Vision magazines are supporting LIVE 2001 so make sure you visit their stands at the show and get to meet the editorial teams face to face.

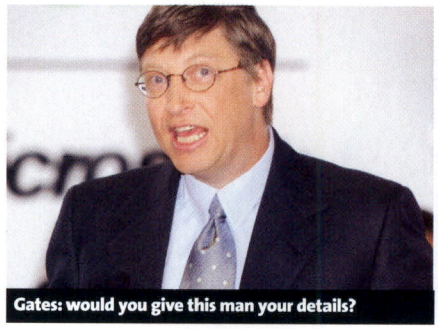
So call now on 0870 902 0444 and quote reference MTH. Buy two adult tickets and get one adult ticket FREE.

See you at LIVE!

*Offer applies to advance bookings only. Offer can not be used in conjunction with any other ticket offer. **Information correct at time of going to press June 01.

their server, which would then 'manage' your life by allowing sites and service providers to automatically take action on your behalf – changing flight times, bidding in auctions, switching delivery dates. It's a remarkable plan, and one Bill Gates claims will be secure: privacy advocates, however, are troubled not only by the potential for hackers but also the basic concept of handing your life over to a third party. The wired world will come at a hefty price.

THE INFORMATION COMMISSIONER and the EC seem to be on the side of privacy, but working against them are the law enforcement agencies. Although it's the US intelligence services who are most eager to assail our right to privacy, the UK government hasn't been slow to put the mechanisms in place for a bit of prying of its own. The EC is currently trying to pass a directive which will ensure the protection of all information transmitted across the Internet, outlawing junk emails, and obliging ISPs to delete traces of surfing. But at the same time European law enforcement agencies are demanding that every phone



Gates: would you give this man your details?

call, every mobile call, every fax, every email, every site's contents, all Internet usage, from anywhere, by everyone, must be recorded, archived and be accessible for at least seven years. And according to a report leaked in May this year, the UK government is quietly backing these proposals.

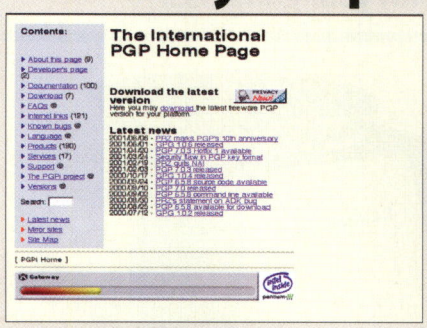
Caspar Bowden, director of the Foundation for Information Policy Research, is less than impressed: 'These proposals would allow fishing expeditions into online activity, browsing habits and Internet associations of everyone in the EU for up to seven years – without any warrant or court order. The Government has repeatedly denied supporting these quasi-totalitarian measures but it turns out it has been secretly lobbying all along. This is sheer duplicity.'

The future of privacy rights on the Internet is rosier than they have been for some time, but abuses will continue and it remains up to individuals to take responsibility for their own privacy. Encryption, anonymity and common sense when filling in forms are the best ways to protect your online privacy. And while the Internet poses problems for the champions of privacy, it has proved itself to be remarkably resilient to government efforts to outlaw the software that helps protect you from prying eyes.

Many people wonder what all the fuss is about since they've got nothing to hide, but if you can't see the benefits of protecting your privacy, try seeing it as a commodity instead. Esther Dyson, the Internet guru, has predicted that in the future companies will be happy to pay us a proper price for a slice of our privacy, to find out what paper we read and what we like for breakfast – but only if we stop giving it away for free.

SITES THAT HELP BEAT THE WEB SNOOPS

Protect your privacy online »



PRETTY GOOD PRIVACY

Written by cryptography guru Phil Zimmerman in 1991, PGP is the most widely used encryption software for securing your emails, and it's free. Until recently it was illegal to export PGP from the US, but now anyone can download it.

www.pgpi.org

HUSHMAIL

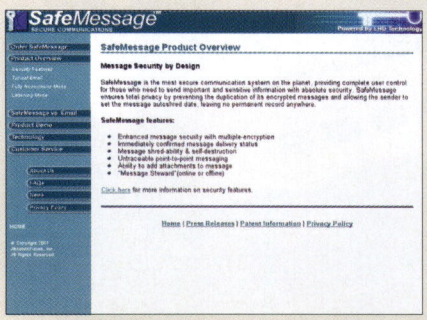
If you want to send email both securely and anonymously, for ease of use this is the best of the secure Web-based email systems.

www.hushmail.com

COOKIE PAL

A cookie management system that automatically detects and rejects cookies from all sites or just from sites you specify. It also lets you view and delete existing cookies on your system.

www.cookiecentral.com



SAFEMESSAGE

Another secure email messaging system that lets you specify a date for the email to 'auto-shred', so no trace of it will be left on any servers.

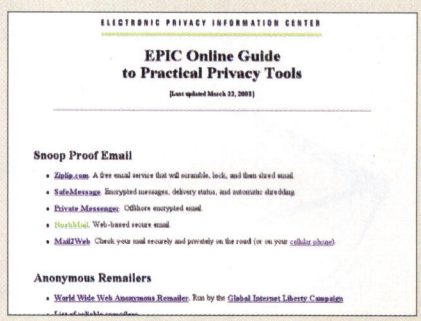
www.safemessage.com/overview.htm

Anonymizer.com
Privacy is your right.
Anonymous Web Surfing - Try it Free
SECURE TUNNELING
Tell a friend about Anonymizer & WIN!
Become an Anonymizer Affiliate. EARN 50%
TRUST your ISP?

ANONYMIZER

You can type in a URL on the home page for free and visit a site anonymously, thus sidestepping cookies. Alternatively there are a number of subscription packages on offer.

www.anonymizer.com


ELECTRONIC PRIVACY INFORMATION CENTER
EPIC Online Guide to Practical Privacy Tools
Snoop Proof Email
Anonymous Remailers

ELECTRONIC PRIVACY INFORMATION CENTRE

If privacy is important to you, sign up for regular alerts on new developments and laws here, or peruse the database of useful resources.

www.epic.org

CLARKS FASTWALKERS £54.99

Buying shoes online has never been a hit – well you can't try them on, can you? The excellent ***www.shoe-shop.com*** is trying to change that with its free delivery and returns policy: these stylish walkers are among the competitive range.

16IN OSCILLATING PEDESTAL FAN £24.99

Don't waste time with ineffectual desk fans – head straight for the daddy of them all and keep cool in the heat with this free-standing monster, courtesy of ***www.argos.co.uk***. Delivery within two working days costs £3.95.

Retailtherapy»

:// As the weather warms up, you don't want to be stuck inside with your gadgets...

HIT CLIPS AND ACCESSORIES FROM £3.99

Sure to be one of the top toys of the summer, Hit Clips are tiny disks which fit into a miniature CD player, ghetto blaster or phone and pump out the likes of Britney and *NSync. Buy online at ***www.qvc.co.uk*** or see ***www.tigertoys.co.uk***.

DOLCE & GABBANA GLASSES £149.95

Try an alternative to perusing opticians' shelves with the designer range of glasses at ***www.iris-spectacles.co.uk***; they'll send frames out for you to try and have an excellent returns policy if you change your mind.

REMINGTON NATURE'S CLOCK £59.99

Wake up with something more pleasant thanks to the Remington Nature's Clock, which rouses you from your slumber with a gradually brightening light which mimics the sunrise. See ***www.remington.co.uk*** for links to stockists.

PHOTOGRAPHY: CHRIS RENNIE

ITRONIX X-C6250 PRO LAPTOP FROM £3000

Wave goodbye to damaged laptops with this 'virtually indestructible' effort from Itronix, which meets military specifications for ruggedness. See ***www.itronix.co.uk*** to email the sales team for details.

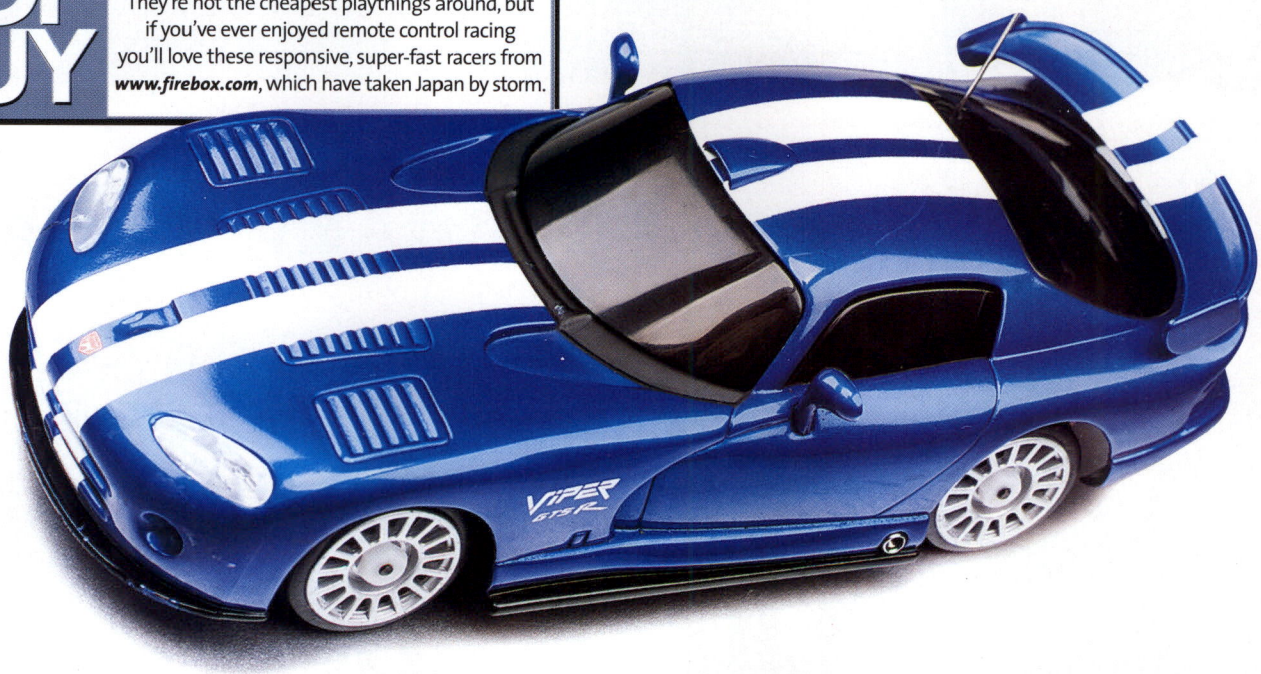
KIIRO POCKET PHOTO £159.99

Gadgetry just keeps getting smaller – and this classy, affordable digital camera is the tiniest yet at just 10 inches tall. Handily, it doubles as a Webcam and a still camera: buy at ***www.kiiro.co.uk*** and get free next-day delivery.

TOP BUY

MINI-Z RACERS £119.95 EACH

They're not the cheapest playthings around, but if you've ever enjoyed remote control racing you'll love these responsive, super-fast racers from ***www.firebox.com***, which have taken Japan by storm.



SIMPLE GUIDELINES FOR PAINLESS ONLINE PURCHASING

TOP TIPS FOR ONLINE SHOPPING»

CHECK THAT THE SITE IS SECURE

A small padlock will appear in the bottom left of your browser to show that you can safely send credit card details through the site. Your Web browser will also tell you whether a site is secure or not when you enter it.

SHOP WITH BRAND-NAME COMPANIES

As with shopping in the real world, you're better off with a company you've actually heard of – and these days, most big name brands own their Web addresses (so you can be sure that ***www.marksandspencer.com*** is, in fact, M&S).

PRINT THE CONTRACT

This is the only permanent record of your purchase, so make sure you keep it, along with your order number, billing address and other details. And here's a fact to put your mind at rest: if it's a UK site, you have the same consumer rights as you do in the high street.

NEVER SEND ANYTHING BY EMAIL

Don't send card details by email – it can be intercepted.

CHECK DELIVERY TIMES AND CHARGES

Companies should tell you the delivery charge, if there is one, on their site. If you're in the Highlands and Islands or Ireland, you may find free delivery doesn't apply.

IF IT GOES WRONG, DON'T WORRY

Contrary to scare stories, online shopping is safer and very often cheaper than traditional methods – and it's in the store's interest to sort out problems quickly.

...get grounded...

metal-is.com

THE NEW FAMILY BOARD GAME

www.incarceration.co.uk

RISK TAKERS
CREATIVITY UNLEASHED

WHAT WEBSITE?

The Best of the Web

@ CHANNELS://

> MUSIC 66
The Net can bring you music news as it happens. We reveal the sites to watch

> MOVIES 68
Choosing a film for the kids can be a minefield. We'll guide you through it

> SPORT 70
As Tiger roars round the Open course, we check the best golf Web sites

> TRAVEL 72
Get round the world on a shoestring budget with the best cheap travel sites

> LEARNING 76
The Web can help you expand your mind by enrolling in courses online

> GAMING 78
Go straight from newbie fodder to games master with these advice sites

> MONEY 82
Utility bills can now be paid online, saving you effort and even money

> SOCIETY 84
Most religions now have an online presence. We rate their efforts

> THE DIRECTORY 92
Hundreds of the best sites on the Web, handpicked for their usefulness to you. You might never need a search engine

SOCIETY Which religion has the best Web site? We put our faith in the Internet

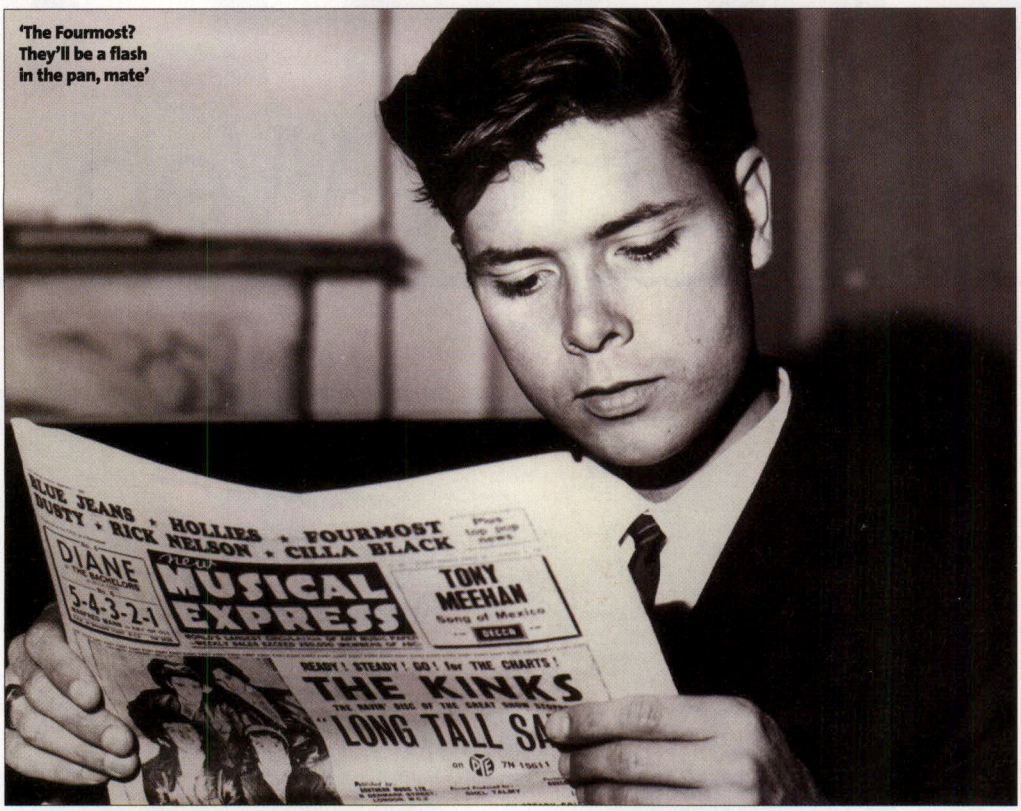
MUSIC Get the news on your desktop

GAMING Get wise with the top advice

FOCUS:// Music news

'I read the news today, oh boy...'

Make sure you're never caught out by the latest musical happenings



'The Fourmost? They'll be a flash in the pan, mate'

@ If you have to bookmark one...

NME.COM

www.nme.com ★★★★★

Shoegazers. Long-haired wasters. Smiths fans. Students. Indie lovers in blackened bedrooms. All of them archetypal readers of Britain's most popular music weekly and therefore the core of the paper's online community, right? Wrong. NME.com has worked hard to shake off the lo-fi reputation of its print version, and now stands up in its own right not only as Europe's most popular music site but also the most reliable and readable source going of up-to-the-minute music news. It's achieved such status by shaking off the guitar fixations of the traditional *NME* and instead encompassing a broad church of contemporary sounds, from metal and classic rock to pop and dance. Here you'll find the latest news on Hear'Say's tour rubbing shoulders with Radiohead reviews; Sepultura sit comfortably next to SClub7, while Mel B fights for space with Motörhead. While the site's home page is a jumble of genres, there are distinct areas for each, giving greater depth through reviews, audio and video samples, artist profiles and links. There's no lip service paid here – each genre is regularly updated and knowledgeably penned (we're particular fans of the pop section's tongue-in-cheek reviews and humorous features).

It's in the news stakes, though, that the site really earns its corn: this is the first place to visit for latest releases, tour news and exclusives from across the musical spectrum. Come back for a few consecutive days and you'll soon appreciate just how effectively NME dominates the online news market – and all without a Smiths fan in sight.

NME.com: by no means the sole preserve of tax-dodging students

ROLLING STONE

rollingstone.com ★★★★

Like *NME*, *Rolling Stone* has acquired legendary offline status over the decades, but also quickly discovered that reputations count for little on the Web. Early incarnations of rollingstone.com bear little relation to the musical Goliath we see before us today: gone are the wordy articles, lengthy interviews and hundreds of MP3s from unsigned bands. Now the focus is on well-written, reliable news and a huge database of artists which includes discographies, recommended listening and biographies for just about every major performer you care to name. The news could be easier to navigate (it appears as a huge, lumpen list of stories rather than under a proper index), but there's no doubting its accuracy. And consider signing up for RS Favourites, which lets you know when your artist has done something of note.

DOTMUSIC

www.dotmusic.com ★★★★

While the focus at Dotmusic is a bit narrower than that of some of its rivals (soul and dance get cursory mentions), there's no doubting the dedication on show at this well-designed portal for all things pop and rock. Dotmusic is always quick with exclusive news and boasts plenty of audio and video snippets; there's also a healthily-stocked shop. But occasionally a greater quantity of stories would come in handy. Full marks, though, for the charts section, which is by far the best place around to catch up on those specialist charts you used to find in the back of the music rags.

BILLBOARD

www.billboard.com ★★★★

Across the pond, *Billboard*'s name is synonymous with the weekly charts by which US stars make their name. Now the record-counters have made their own site – and a fine effort it is, too, with new stories every day and a regular rundown of record sales from across the globe. Ever wondered what the hottest acts on the Web are? Look no further, as Billboard brings together a dozen of the best charts from cyberspace to help you research the most searched-for, downloaded and bought artists around, alongside well-written album and live reviews. A frequently fascinating and endlessly useful service.

MUSIC365

www.music365.co.uk ★★★

You almost certainly know 365 from its excellent range of sites. The music offering, however, remains largely undiscovered, lying in the

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY; PICTURES: NME

Billboard .COM
Artist Finder coming soon!
MemberServices
Login / Details
Billboard Directories
Buy Billboard Print
TheBillboardStore
The Charts
Hits of The Web
Music rankings from top
Daily Music News
Corgan Signs On For New Order Shows, Album
May 25, 2001, 5:15 PM ET
BILLY CORGAN
Former Smashing Pumpkins frontman Billy Corgan has found a part-time summer job. A spokesperson for the bald-headed rocker confirms he will join veteran U.K. electronic pop group New Order as a touring guitarist for select dates, rumored to include four performances on Moby's Area: One festival this summer, as well as an appearance at the Fuji Festival in Japan this July.
Read the Full Story
More Daily Music News
Bon Jovi Planning New Studio Album, Box Set
Writer Comes Clean On Fake Stipe Profile
New Goo Goo Dolls Album Due By End Of Year
Billboard Bits: Soccer Six, BlackHawk, Faithless
Multimedia
Billboard Radio
LISTEN HERE
Billboard MINUTES
28K | 56K | T1
CHOOSE BANDWIDTH
RINGO STARR
EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW
SUMMER TOURING 2001
Billboard: US chartmaker which often interviews *Thomas the Tank Engine* narrators

shadow of larger sites with bigger budgets. Pity, as Music365 has plenty of admirable qualities: as with its sister sites, navigation is simplicity itself; the reviews and interviews are always well-informed; the polls and message boards lively. However, too much of the news lacks depth and Music365 is never first to the biggest stories; gossip, instead, seems to be its stock-in-trade, and if it's scurriless pop rumour-mongering you're after, you'd be better off at the much-vaunted ***www.popbitch.com***.

MTV.com: *Daria* but no Beavis

You expect insights and exclusives – and you'll find them

SONICNET
www.sonicnet.com ★★★★

An overwhelming interest in US rock is a prerequisite for visiting Sonicnet, but if you can wade your way through the acres of column space devoted to obscure college bands (Alien Ant Farm, anyone?), you'll find one of the most reliable news sources around. Sonicnet never misses a trick in picking up on the latest happenings, but there are plenty of added flourishes which make this well worth a visit, too: a daily dose of Napster news for the technologically sound, regular sessions from big-name artists and the exemplary Newswire, which monitors dozens of the best music sites around and updates every few minutes with the freshest stories.

WORLDPOP
www.worldpop.com ★★★★

Chart pop isn't just for 14-year olds (although, admittedly, that is the core audience), and if you're one of the growing legion of grown-ups heavily into prefab bands in a post-ironic fashion, Worldpop is an essential bookmark. Everything the teenybopper (of any age) could possibly want is here, from the latest SClub7 ringtones and video clips from Hear'Say to a release calendar, lashings of news and all the latest gossip. Thanks to a tie-in with Saturday morning cult hit *CD:UK*, there are also backstage interviews and performances from the kids' favourites. If you know your A1s from your AllStars, there's no better place to be.

MTV
www.mtv.com ★★★★★

You'd expect insight and exclusives from the world's best-known music channel – and you'd be right. MTV.com has its finger on the pulse when it comes to news, as well as special sections for every major show, areas for artists of note, and a well-stocked shop. The real boon, though, is the free downloads section, which rounds up exclusives and new releases to form the most under-rated audio archive on the Web. The UK-specific ***www.mtv.co.uk*** is just as lively, with extra competitions and a gig guide.

BBC RADIO 1
www.bbc.co.uk/radio1 ★★★★

Radio 1's *Newsbeat* bulletins have long been the best radio way to keep up to date on all things musical, and the principle has been extended online with a regular feed bringing all the latest news, with a particular emphasis on 'urban' music and dance. *Newsbeat* also has a nice take on cultural issues of general yoof interest, which makes it pretty much a one-stop shop for the young and trendy: with the latest charts and dozens of message boards, this is a well-designed and always useable portal.

@CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials

BAND SITES
UBL.com
www.ubl.com
Should be your first port of call to use the huge search engine.
Bigmouth
www.bigmouth.co.uk
UK-specific site with many a link.
Wall of Sound
wallofsound.go.com
Links and features from the US.

DOWNLOADS
Emusic.com
www.emusic.com
'The premier source for legitimate MP3s'.
Napster
www.napster.com
Global access to MP3 files on other members' hard drives.
MP3.com
www.mp3.com
The site which started it all, still thriving on unsigned bands.
Garageband
www.garageband.com
Top-quality artists screened by discerning judges.

GIGS AND TOURS
Aloud.com
www.aloud.com
Top search engine for every kind of UK gig, from classical to rock.
firstcalltickets.com
www.firstcalltickets.com
Tickets for just about everything from gigs to flower shows.
SceneOne
www.sceneone.co.uk
Easy-to-use guide.
Ticketmaster
www.ticketmaster.co.uk
The best ticket service.
Way Ahead
www.wayahead.com
Well-priced tickets.

BUYING CDS
Secondsounds
secondsounds.com
Cheap second-hand CDs.
Audiostreet
www.audiostreet.co.uk
Cheap prices and free postage.
Play247
www.play247.com
Cheap chart CDs.
recordstore.co.uk
www.recordstore.co.uk
'*The* home of dance music online'.

MIXING
DJ Sounds
www.djsounds.com
Spin the wheels of steel.
eJay
www.ejay.com
One of the first online mixing portals – and still one of the best.
Scratch It
www.turntable.de
Plenty of fun during long, boring afternoons in the office.

NEWSGROUP
alt.music.mp3.napster
New and experienced MP3 users share help and advice.

MAILING LIST
Get a different 'interesting' lyric in your mail each day. Join from ***woozei.dynip.com***.

emusic: none of your back-of-a-lorry stuff here

Aloud.com: helps you avoid handing over the contents of your wallet to touts

NEED MORE? **Latest music sites** Site Insider p18
Useful music addresses The Directory p92

FOCUS:// Films for kids

Seen and not heard

Keep the nippers quiet and safe by choosing a film they'll want to watch and you'll want them to see

Make sure they're not gazing at something ugly

Kids in Mind: cold-shoulders nudity

MOVIE MOM

www.moviemom.com ★★★★

Based on the best-selling book, Movie Mom is the brainchild of Nell Minow, whose site is an endearingly non-preachy assessment of the latest films and classics. With every film accorded a recommended age, Minow presents an open-minded but careful review that will definitely appeal to concerned parents. It's a serious piece of work, with an extensive archive of prior reviews with added features like The All Time Best List – certainly handy for the parent who wants that dead-cert favourite. Also, Minow provides a wealth of links for those who want to learn more or obtain these films. Certainly, the whole family therapy angle is sometimes a bit much – 'Why was Agent Murdoch so attached to the dog? Why did Gordon live the way he did? How will he be different now?' – but at its core, Movie Mom is a thoroughly helpful and informative resource.

KIDS IN MIND

www.kids-in-mind.com ★★★

This site addresses what must be the core concern for any parent choosing a children's film: how much sex, violence and profanity does it contain? Kids in Mind is just the place to know exactly what they'll see. With extensive coverage of the mainstream, every review addresses profanity, sex and nudity and violence and gore. The site also provides angles for discussion and enthusiastically tells you which values are being portrayed. Non-critical assessments, neither overtly religious or politically heavy, give you an honest and straight view of the content, if sometimes a bit too zealous: '*Shrek* features a man in bed with exposed shoulders and chest' (call the cops!). Kids in Mind is aimed at the US market, but releases inevitably cross the pond. With graphic content more of a concern than ever for parents, this site will give you greater choice.

TEACH WITH MOVIES

www.teachwithmovies.org ★★★

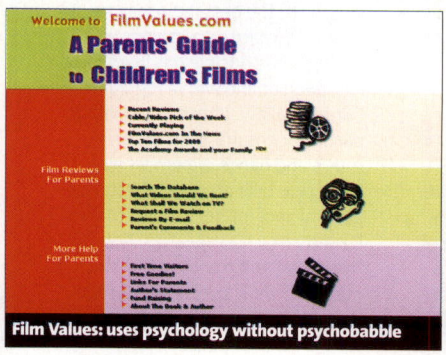
Now here's an interesting idea: a comprehensive reviews site that will tell you a film's educational value. TWM aims to enable parents to use quality films 'to enhance a common frame of reference and advance children's moral and emotional development'. With search indices like minimum age, character development, cultural heritage, TWM will deliver a list of classic movies that will allow your child to learn at the same time as enjoying. For instance, *The Wizard of Oz* is recommended for children five years and older on the basis of its handling of friendship and self-esteem. The system isn't flawless, however, and sometimes discounts enjoyment potential: musical biography *Strauss: The King of Three Quarter Time* considers issues such as friendship, child abuse – yet is aimed at six-year-olds. That hiccup aside, TWM sports an intriguing premise, aimed mainly at 6-15 years.

@ If you have to bookmark one...

FILM VALUES

www.filmvalues.com ★★★★★

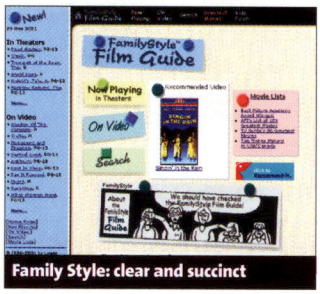
According to psychiatrist Arthur Taussig, our children are in trouble, faced by a whirlpool of moral darkness, with the media deeply involved in the mess. Sounds serious. And with that at the forefront of your worried parental mind, you can peruse this thoroughly excellent site, based on Taussig's book, which aims to be 'the essential reference for parental survival in the age of media saturation'. To say this is a complete guide is an understatement, with every conceivable concern – right down to whether a crime in any given film goes punished or unpunished– addressed with candour and without psychobabble. That's not to say it skims the subject, expertly using its psychology background to cover the educational angle – taking every opportunity to point out areas of discussion. With 1000 reviews available, the site offers an excellent search function in which parents can list their particular concerns, the site then listing every available film with such features. And if your chosen film isn't there? No problem, you can request a film to be reviewed. Also featuring such helpful innovations as reviews by email, Film Values ensures that all concerns can be explored and addressed with ease.



Film Values: uses psychology without psychobabble

As a resource and educational tool, Film Values scores highly, free as it is of pushy rhetoric or technical jargon, Taussig's guide does exactly what it says on the tin. With such a professional approach and such expert consultation, parental concerns cannot fail to be assuaged and as such, this should be your first port of call for child-friendly films.

WORDS: DANNY GRAYDON; PICTURES: KOBAL



Family Style: clear and succinct

DISNEY UK

www.disney.co.uk ★★★

Though it has serious competition nowadays, the House of Mouse is still the pre-eminent purveyor of quality children's fare. The UK arm of Disney's Net presence, a portal to all its current promotional sites for the likes of *102 Dalmations* and others, provides a comprehensive view of all their current releases. As it's official, there will be no critical appraisal, so you are really placing your trust in the brand, but the flashy presentation should give you an idea of what to expect. While the Flash-laden, animated design is a tad clunky and perhaps bewildering to non-seasoned surfers, it's certainly attractive and a great resource of all things Disney. The site promises forthcoming sections on all its releases, which will make it a top research stop for the classics.

SPOTLIGHT ON ENTERTAINMENT

www.christiananswers.net/spotlight/home.html ★★★★

This Christian site is pleasingly free of fire-and-brimstone morality, favouring a straightforward, honest and friendly approach that will be of undoubted use to parents with concerns for offensive content. Splendidly up-to-date, all the latest releases are usually covered within a few days of release. Moral ratings are provided but there is also an assessment of 'movie-making quality', which at least recognises a well-made flick, even if it has dodgy moments. There's a complete reviews listing, placed in order of offensiveness, and all reviews are bolstered by reader's comments – ranging from the helpful to the slightly unnerving. Objective, free of fundamentalist rage and with a genuine affection for movies, SoE is a strong resource for parents.

SCREEN IT!

www.screenit.com ★★★

With a regularly updated wealth of material, Screen It!'s extensive coverage of films exclusively aimed at parents. The intensity borders on the over-protective at times ('inappropriate music'?) and the quantity may mean you don't have time to take it all in, but the handy navigation ensures that you jump directly to your chief concern – be it sex scenes, smoking or imitative behaviour. Some may feel it's overkill, but parents will appreciate being told too much rather than too little. If you're reassured that the film is suitable, link straight to Amazon to purchase. Much thought and effort has gone in to this and, armed with a decent, non-fearsome tone, Screen It! will tell you just about everything you need to know.

FAMILY STYLE

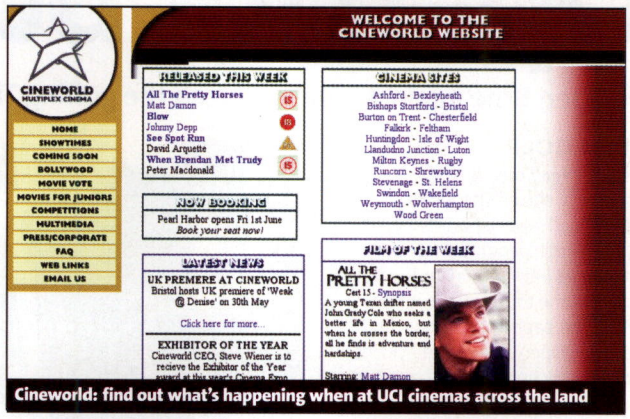
www.familystyle.com ★★★★

For parents not wishing to sift through a mountain of information, Family Style will be attractive for its clear layout and specific children's section. Split in to cinema and video, reviews are jargon-free and assessing a film's offensive content (profanity, nudity, violence, the usual) is a very quick affair, with helpful bar chart graphics supplemented by an overview of what America's critics thought of the film. Additionally, the site has a great line in movie Lists (Best Film Oscar Winners and such) which will help you make an informed choice. Being a US site, you may end up researching films that never turn up in the UK – although every title here is available through Reel.com.

Disney: prepare to be dazzled by the House of Mouse's Flash-laden extravaganza

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials



Cineworld: find out what's happening when at UCI cinemas across the land

MOVIE NEWS AND RELEASE DATES

The Internet Movie Database (IMDb)
uk.imdb.com
The bible of online film – use the search engine or be lost.

Hollywood.com
www.hollywood.com
The latest gossip from the star-lined streets.

Mr Showbiz: Movie Index
mrshowbiz.go.com/reviews/moviereviews/index.html
Find out what's playing and what's coming up at this competent site with a discerning edge.

Dark Horizons
www.darkhorizons.com
Trailers, reviews, release dates and a section for 'rumours 'n' scoops'.

MOVIE REVIEWS

Popcorn.co.uk
www.popcorn.co.uk
Easy-to-find DVD and video reviews including pictures.

Movie Review Query Engine
www.mrqe.com
Flamboyantly-titled site featuring 19,000+ films.

The Trailer Park
www.movie-trailers.com
Trailers for all the newest films.

CINEMA LISTINGS AND DIRECTORIES

UCI Cinemas
www.cineworld.co.uk
Find out what's playing, as well as what's on sale in the kiosk here.

Virgin Net – Movies
www.virgin.net/movies
Takes the hassle out of organising a trip to the cinema.

Cineworld – Multiplex Cinema
www.cineworld.co.uk
UK film portal that also includes a cinema finder.

Atom Films: cutting-edge cartoons

OFFICIAL FILM RESOURCES

Fox Movies
www.foxmovies.com
Provides links to all 20th Century Fox movie releases.

Miramax Cafe
www.miramax.com
Links to all of Miramax's releases, plus general movie news.

Warner Bros Online
www.movies.warnerbros.com
Site featuring WB's new films and lost classics.

ONLINE SHORTS

Atom Films
www.atomfilms.com
Shockwave-only shorts.

Britshorts
www.britshorts.com
British and European mini-films.

NEWSGROUP

de.rec.film.misc
Share your comments and views about all aspects of cinema here with fellow amateur reviewers.

MAILING LIST

Join a film discussion group by sending an email marked 'info filmchat' to ***majordomo@lists.uoregon.edu***.

CHAT ROOM

www.film-philosophy.com
Read and discuss film articles.

NEED MORE? **This month's movie sites** Site Insider p18
Useful media addresses The Directory p92

FOCUS:// Golf

Open for business

It's Open time again, so we've sorted the golfing Tigers from the tiddlers

OPEN GOLF

www.opengolf.com ★★★★★

The official site of 'The' Open (like the Football Association, it doesn't bother with a geographical referent) comes into its own during the course of the tournament; it had 128 million page impressions during the 2000 Open. Images and videos are regularly updated, and last year you could walk (well, jump) round the St Andrew's course with 360-degree Ipix views from each tee, fairway and hole, or even fly round with the Video Fly By. The same treatment is promised for this year's course on the blustery Lancashire coast at Royal Lytham St Anne's. As you'd expect, there's a constantly updated leaderboard on the front page with hole-by-hole scores so you can keep an eye on the lead while you plumb the depths of this fact-filled site. For instance, did you know that Tiger Woods, who at the time of going to press held all four major championships, will be one of 15 Open winners ambling around Royal Lytham St Annes? No? You would if you read Open Golf...

The technique lessons weren't going very well

GOLF.COM

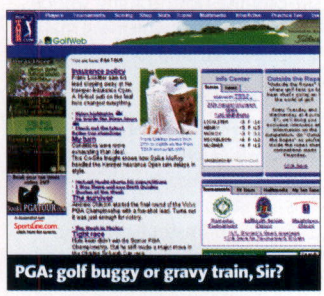
www.golf.com ★★★★

Winner of the green jacket for the best domain name, Golf.com is yet another site to feature a link-up – this time with NBC Sports. This ensures a good deal of up-to-the-minute news; but Golf.com isn't all about the latest happenings. When we visited the site, the numerous features ranged from the obvious but necessary (a look back at Tiger Woods' incredible major-winning run) through the instructive (Johnny Miller explains, with video clips, how to hit it under the wind) to the esoteric (Argentinians in golf). The main site is mirrored in the Golf for Women section, which follows the same layout, except it's in pretty purple. If you think even that's a poor judgement by the site, and that all golfers should be treated unisexually, witness a section within Golf for Women called Beauty which advises lady golfers to 'give your skin and hair a botanical boost with products made from natural ingredients' – an irrelevant bogey which spoils an otherwise strong site.

PGATOUR.COM

www.pgatour.com ★★★★★

Sensibly, many top sports associations have thrown in their lot with professional magazines to create super-sites. Such is the case with the PGA Tour site, which can also be accessed via GolfWeb (***www.golfweb.com***). The PGA Tour is the money-making gravy train which all golfers aspire to join, a collection of events which may feature all, some or just a few of the top-name players (depending on the prize and prestige). They're all here on this huge site, which is strong on video and audio as well as good, old-fashioned wordage. Navigation can get slightly tricky as there are two elements, PGA at the top and Golfweb down at the left, but once you've cracked this you can switch between intelligent articles on Golfweb and facts aplenty on PGA. Like many American sites, stats are available in spades: you want to know Tommy Armour III's driving accuracy percentage? He ranks 31st with 71.9 percent.


PGA: golf buggy or gravy train, Sir?

19TH HOLE

19thHole.com ★★★★

For a site to describe itself as 'the ultimate virtual golf experience' is a large boast. It's debatable whether 19th Hole fullfils its promise, but it has a lot to maintain the attention. In truth, it's more of a portal, leading you to other sites' content, but these include several interesting areas, and in this respect it's just like the real 19th hole – the bar at the end of the course. As in any bar, there's art on display and there's also someone trying to sell you merchandise (and advice on which is the best kind). There are also pub comedians, or in this case monthly columnist Sandy Bunker (geddit?) and 'golf's funniest family', the hapless cartoon-strip Duffers. You can also subscribe to several magazines, buy thousands of books and chat idly through the message board, strangely named 'The Grill'.

WORDS: GARY PARKINSON ; PICTURES: KOBAL

@ If you have to bookmark one...

GOLF ONLINE

www.golfonline.com ★★★★★

Take one major magazine which flies off the racks in the USA and add it to one of the most Net-savvy multimedia broadcasters in the world, and you've got the basis for a very good golf site indeed. Like PGA (see above), the makers of the US magazine simply entitled *Golf* know the value of a good online tie-up. As such, they've got together with CNN/Sports Illustrated to produce a top-notch site that should appeal to armchair and active golfers alike. Those who like to get out in the field will adore the Instruction section, which includes a host of ways for players of all levels to sharpen their game. If you can get over the rather twee division of sections into 'Front Nine' and 'Back Nine', and for the insistence on calling each top story 'On The Tee' and others 'Through the Green', you'll find more than enough here to satisfy your appetite, including several news stories a day to keep abreast of developments. It'll be interesting to see who has the best coverage of this year's Open – this or the official site (again, see above), but it's our feeling that Golf Online will run the official one very close. Overall, this site's stronger list of features will retain the fans' interest long after the last putt. As nicely laid out as the finest course, Golf Online is one you'll keep coming back to all year.

Golf Online: as nicely laid out as the finest course

19th Hole: all the action's at the bar

NOTHING BUT GOLF

www.nothingbutgolf.com ★★★★

An all-inclusive sports portal this ain't. As you might guess from the name, Nothing But Golf deals only with that sport which requires its competitors to hit a small ball into a small hole half a mile away, using only sticks, and even then as infrequently as possible. A strange idea for a game, and thankfully Nothing But Golf takes a sideways look at the sport. There's a daily updated trivia question and plenty of humour in the Hall of Shame – the Internet equivalent of embarrassing admissions at the 19th hole. And like the 19th hole, these admissions – apparently unmonitored – are often near the knuckle. There's also the chance for successful golfers to register their holes-in-one, and an introductory guide to golfing etiquette and rules.

FREE GOLF INFO

www.freegolfinfo.com ★★★★

A strange site name: rather than pointing out where players can find free golf, it's inferring that most information on the Net comes at a price (untrue). It's also oddly laid out, with a front page which seems determined to cram in as much as possible – and to hell with the reader's eyesight. But while it may initially seem like information overload, it's actually a haven of advice for the keen golfer. The Improve Your Game section includes eight instruction videos, from bunkers to butterfly grips, streamable in various qualities from 28.8Kbps to a T1 connection. And the instruction isn't just video-based; there are dozens of advice pages replete with drawings. The trademarked GameTrack system allows players to keep tabs on their handicap progress and even send messages to fellow golfers. A fine use of the Net's capabilities for keen players.

GOLF MAGIC

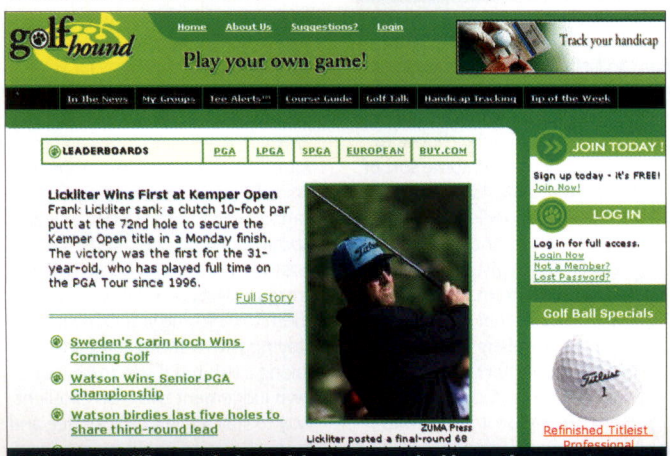
www.golfmagic.com ★★★★

Customisable news is one of the most useful features of any Web site, and Golf Magic scores highly on this. With a choice of 22 categories, from major professional events to amateur county golf, and encompassing travel, equipment, etiquette and even course design, subscribers to Golf Magic's newsletters can outline exactly what they require – and even the frequency with which the missives are delivered. Even reading the articles on the site gives you the opportunity to forward them to friends, and while the design may be a little dull – there isn't much in the way of illustration to the actual stories – it is at least functional, with the left-hand menu always available should you get lost. A comprehensive and extremely user-friendly news service.

GOLF HOUND

www.golfhound.com ★★★★

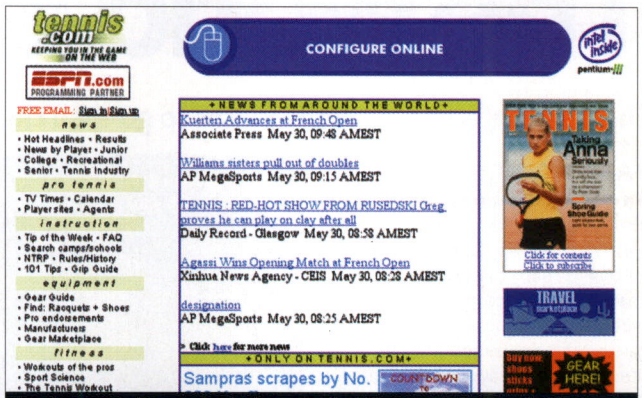
Golf Hound describes itself as 'a player's community', but there's also plenty for the armchair fan to sink their teeth into. Sure, the site tries to cajole you onto the course – 'we think of golf as a participation sport, not a spectator sport' – but you can still enjoy Golf Hound without squeezing into spiked shoes. Admittedly you won't then feel the need to use the Find a Course section or absorb the Tip of the Week; but even if you don't own a putter you can peruse the news stories and leaderboards. Neither do you have to employ a caddy to use the Golf Horoscope ('Your Pars are in the Stars').



Golf Hound: Sniffing out the best advice to stop you barking up the wrong tree

@CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials



Tennis.com: sterling service for fans who don't just watch during Wimbledon

LATEST NEWS AND SCORES

ESPN.com
espn.go.com
Scores for all sports, with a distinctly American bias.

Sky Sports
www.skysports.com
Forget begrudging the TV subscription fee – this is hot sports news from Sky that comes free of charge.

Soccernet
www.soccernet.com
Score flashes from all UK games (part of the ESPN network).

Sporting Life
www.sporting-life.com
News, scores and betting advice on everything from football to the NFL.

TOP FOOTBALL SITES

Football365.com
www.football365.com
Humour, news and plenty of features.

FourFourTwo
www.fourfourtwo.com
The online home of Britain's biggest-selling football magazine.

Teamtalk
www.teamtalk.com
Independent club news service.

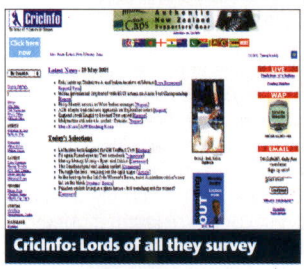
soccer-links.com
www.soccer-links.com
Links for world sites.

ONLINE BETTING SITES

Blue Square
www.bluesq.com
Best-known online bookie.

Sporting Index
www.sportingindex.com
The biggest spread-betting site.

Victor Chandler
www.victorchandler.com
User-friendly site from the traditional bookie.



CricInfo: Lords of all they survey

FOLLOW EVENTS LIVE

PlanetFootball.com
www.planetfootball.com
Hub site for English football clubs' audio broadcasts.

Sport On Air
www.sportonair.com
Up-to-date streamed broadcasts, covering football to cricket.

talkSPORT
www.talksport.net
Listen to the radio station's sports coverage as it happens.

SITES FOR INDIVIDUAL SPORTS

planet-rugby.com
www.planet-rugby.com
Where the oval ball rules – hot news from around the globe.

Cricinfo
www.cricket.org
The definitive cricket site.

Tennis.com
www.tennis.com
Everything to do with tennis except strawberries and cream.

NEWSGROUP

rec.sport.golf
Share your love of the small-balled game with others here.

MAILING LIST

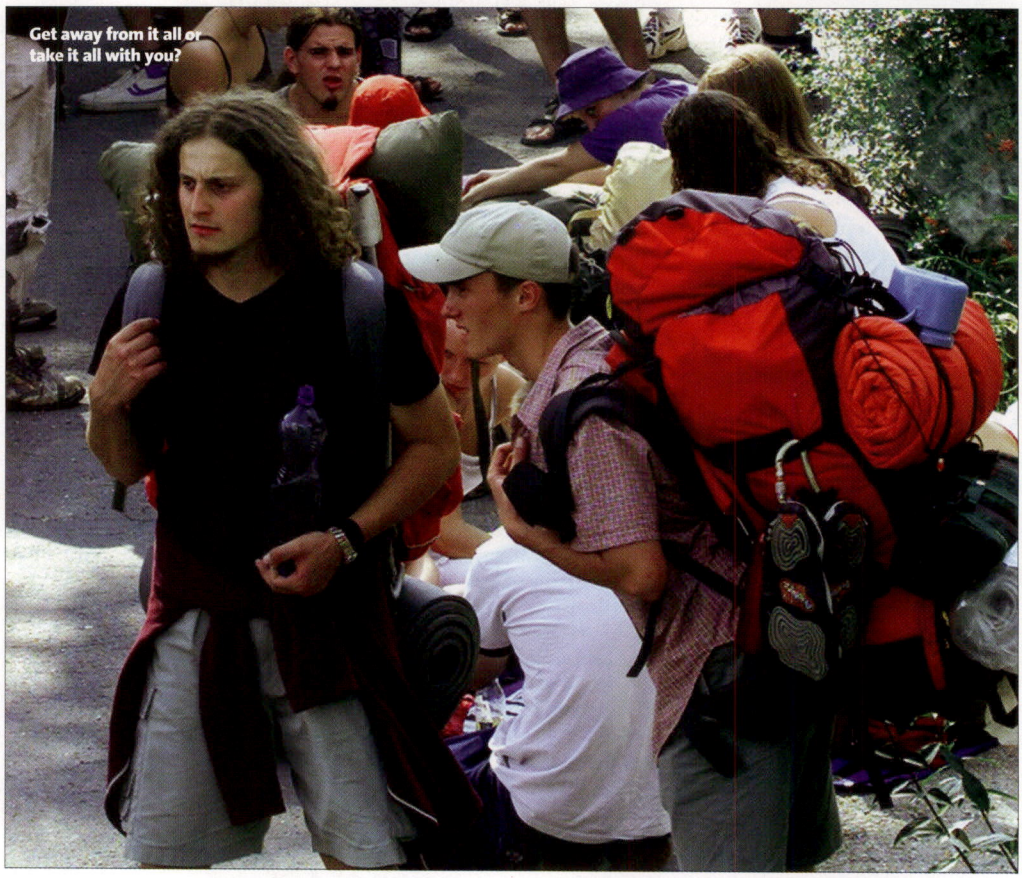
Receive weekly golf lessons and online tips by sending an email to ***danielraleigh-subscribe@topica.com***.

NEED MORE? Useful sports addresses The Directory p92

FOCUS:// Backpacking

The world is your lobster

Check the Internet, clock the places to go then chuck a pack on your back and clear off around the world


Get away from it all or take it all with you?

BACKPACKERHQ.COM

www.backpackerhq.com ★★★★

It's strange that Backpackerhq.com seems to offer no country guides among its many categories. For apart from this anomaly, it certainly lives up to its name, acting as a gateway for thousands of useful sites for budget travellers. Click on the map to select the country of your choice, find a category (such as accommodation, entertainment or work) and a related topic (apartments, bars, and so on) and peruse the sites offered. Despite their exhaustive number, the sites are organised clearly and logically, so it takes seconds to find what you're after, whether it's trekking companies in Canada or Internet cafés in Turkey. In addition to the geographically categorised sites, there are Essentials (such as flights, health and insurance) and an excellent range of Useful sites, including online newspapers, Internet radio and Interflora – perfect for sending birthday bouquets to loved ones at home, even if you're on the other side of the world.

ALTERNATIVE TRAVELERS

www.alternativetravelers.net

★★★★

It's good to find photographs alongside so many of the entries on this site, which offers extensive databases of international hostels, tours and Internet cafés plus a selection of international events and festivals. While there's always the possibility that the picture might hide the truth, it's useful when choosing somewhere to stay. Each entry is accompanied by the key details of the hostel or service, and many also provide online contact and booking facilities. While it's not exclusively a site for backpackers, they are nonetheless catered for in the tour section with several good-value options. This was the only site we found that sensibly lists all its entries alphabetically by city rather than by country alone. Other helpful aspects include a database of companies offering voluntary work and the option to email the resident travel expert with a query.

GLOBAL FREELOADERS

www.globalfreeloaders.com ★★★★

You don't have to resort to airports and park benches for free accommodation. The reciprocal arrangement at Global Freeloaders allows anyone happy to offer a traveller a rent-free room in their own home to find someone abroad prepared to do the same for them. Once you've registered your own room, you can look for free digs for yourself in the country you want to visit during the dates you'll be there. All types of accommodation can be found, from a small single room in Sofia, Bulgaria, to a cottage in Langa, Tonga. Supply a few words about yourself to be sent to the host with your email address, then cross your fingers while you wait for them to welcome you. Of course, staying with a stranger means taking a risk, but if you trust your own judgement this is an excellent way to stay somewhere for free and enjoy all the insight living as a local brings any foreign visitor.

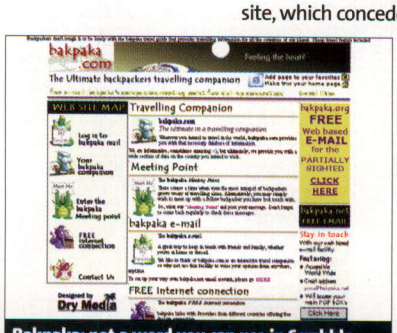
@ If you have to bookmark one...

BAKPAKA

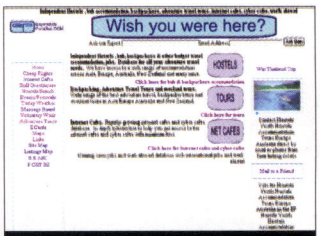
www.bakpaka.com ★★★★★

'Backpackers: don't rough it or be lonely'. Bakpaka's well-meaning catchphrase reflects the traveller's fears, but the site offers practical preparation with the Travel Companion section's clearly organised links to sites for all the key concerns – accommodation, travel advice, health and safety, climate reports, embassy details and emergency numbers. The Country Guide links to World Travel Guide Online's (***www.wtgonline.com***) maps and lists; Travel Companion also links to cybercafes.com (***www.cybercafes.com***) and offers its own details for a selection of Internet cafés in each country.

Communication is a popular theme on this homely site, which concedes that even those who choose to travel alone will need some sort of contact eventually. As well as free Web-based mail, including a special version for the partially sighted, Bakpaka gives a small but growing list of international ISPs offering free Internet access, plus a forum for travellers to give each other advice. In short, the rest of the site is in perfect and personable English which avoids waffle, taking you straight to where you want to go.



Bakpaka: not a word you can use in Scrabble



Alternative Travelers: aren't they all?

AMAZON ROAD

www.amazonroad.com ★★★★

For thrifty backpackers, air travel can be a crippling expense, so the largest section of this budget-travel site provides links to sites to help you find the cheapest methods of flying. Among the more familiar offerings, such as last-minute deals and the option to search for a flight by naming your price (the reputation of unfamiliar airlines can be checked on a linked air disasters site), are more unusual suggestions. It sounds dodgy, but apparently it's perfectly legal, in the US at least, to carry a package for a courier company as part of your baggage allowance in return for a substantial contribution to a one-way air ticket. And then there's the site started by two ex-pilots who tell you how to track down cheap flights your travel agents won't know about, such as those available on empty business jets or private aeroplanes. If you don't mind a bit of effort, tips offs like can save you considerable amounts of cash and bring extra adventure to your trip.

BUDGET TRAVEL RESOURCES... WITH A TWIST

www3.sympatico.ca/donna.mcsherry

★★★★★

The twist in the title is the ingenious, if sometimes perilous, resourcefulness of its contributors in their efforts to save money. The Cheap Like Me Travel Society section offers sensible, clever and illicit general tips on paying as little as possible, if not nothing at all, for travel, accommodation, food and sight-seeing in foreign countries. While booking charter flights and visiting only free attractions are perfectly sound pieces of advice for any traveller with an eye on the budget, perhaps only the more cunning traveller should pretend to be a guest at a party in order to help himself to the buffet, or get arrested in order to have a free bed in jail. An entire section is dedicated to reviewing and rating airports as overnight accomodation, and a small and odd assortment of country guides offers tips on thrifty – but legal – travel in places as far flung as Dublin and the rainforests of Ecuador. A bible for skinflints. »

WORDS: ALEX NEWBY; PICTURES: PA, KOBAL

LINKS ;-) GET A JOB SOMEWHERE ELSE

Start a new life via the Web

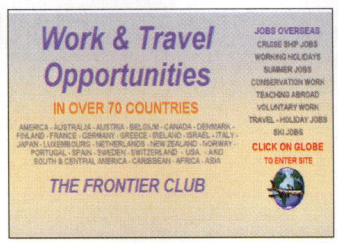
The world, they say, is getting smaller all the time. As any geologist will tell you, that simply isn't true – but the Web has brought us significantly closer together. In fact, international relocation has never been simpler since the dawn of new technology, to the extent where it's now perfectly possible to start a new life over the Net.

Dispel all thoughts of Foreign Legions or cash-strapped backpackers too: the biggest online marketplace is for experienced professionals in emerging economies. International recruitment has become a reality – and it seems more people are taking the emigration option than ever before.

International recruitment has become a reality

So where do you start? Finding a job overseas should be simplicity itself with the Web's help, although sites aimed specifically at would-be emigrees might not be the best place to start. About's superb Moving Abroad guide at ***intljobs.about.com*** contains an extremely helpful listing of foreign newspapers' online classifieds, taking you straight to available posts in your country of interest. Network Overseas (***www.networkoverseas.cc***) is among the best of the overseas recruitment agencies, offering openings in nursing, teaching and IT for British citizens.

If your employment tastes are slightly more off the beaten track, you'll still find them catered for online. Hot Recruit (***www.hotrecruit.co.uk***) does a nice line in 'crazy jobs', including being a rickshaw rider or a farmer in the Outback ('the land of Castlemaine XXXX', as it helpfully points out). The more sensible Work4Travel (***www.work4travel.co.uk***) suggest a number of ways in which you can fund a lengthy trip abroad by working yourself into the ground, be it teaching, assisting at summer camps or picking grapes. Email postcard testimonies from previous workers give a decent flavour of the work on offer.



Of course, finding a post is only half the battle. There are then the cultural considerations of relocation and the actual process of moving itself. Expat Site at ***www.expatsite.com*** will cover many of your problems for you – aimed at Brits abroad, or shortly to be moving abroad, it contains listings from companies the world over who'd just love to help on your big day, alongside columns covering tax, visa requirements and form-filling. Expat Network (***www.expatnetwork.com***) does a similar job, but its hand-holding continues after your move, with a global community of exiled Brits to tap into for contacts or companionship. If Down Under is your chosen destination, ***www.workingin.com*** has plenty of cultural tidbits to dip into; if you're heading for the States, ***www.moving.com*** lists removal firms and other vital services (and make sure you stop by ***www.green-cardlottery.com*** for immigration advice).

So you've got the job and your plans are underway. You've visited ***www.travlang.com*** to learn the lingo. Anything else? Run a final check on the CIA World Factbook (***www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook***) for a compendium of crime, natural disaster and military instability. You might understand why that executive post in Baghdad attracted so few applications...

Bing and Bob: how to disappear completely

fashion video

QuickCam Pro 3000

QuickCam Web

QuickCam Traveler
mobile webcam / digital camera combi

Show yourself to a friend. Show yourself to the world. It's easy with QuickCam® Internet video cameras. Broadcast clear video, anywhere around the globe, live over the Web. Don't let a little distance get in your way. Let friends and family see your best, with Logitech®. **www.logitech.com**

PC WORLD SIMPLY TEMPO

Available at Buy.com, selected Currys and Dixons stores, PC World, Staples, Simply Computers, computer retailers on Tottenham Court Road, Tempo and many independent computer retailers. For further information, call 0208-308 6582.

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FOCUS:// Backpacking <cont>

THE TRAVELLER'S LOUNGE

www.thetravellerslounge.co.uk

★★★★

With appetites whetted by tips on flight route planning and suggestions for exotic overland trips such as the Trans-Siberian train journey, round-the-world travellers can scratch itchy feet immediately by booking their transport with one of the online specialist travel agents linked to this site under Your Flight Plan in the Planning Your Trip section. Getting Around has yet more information on travel, including details and contacts for organised overland tours – creature comforts not generally included – and travel passes. Links are patchier here, but with the Internet to hand it's enough to have the names of all the key companies and what to expect. In addition to transport, there are plenty of other useful areas on this site, and it's worth working your way through the slightly laborious navigation to find advice on how to avoid poisoning yourself and the quickest way to recover from diarrhoea if you do. There's little on offer for accommodation and country guides, though a list of the year's global festivals is a bonus.

Most of the articles are first-hand accounts of experiences

EUROTRIP

www.eurotrip.com ★★★★

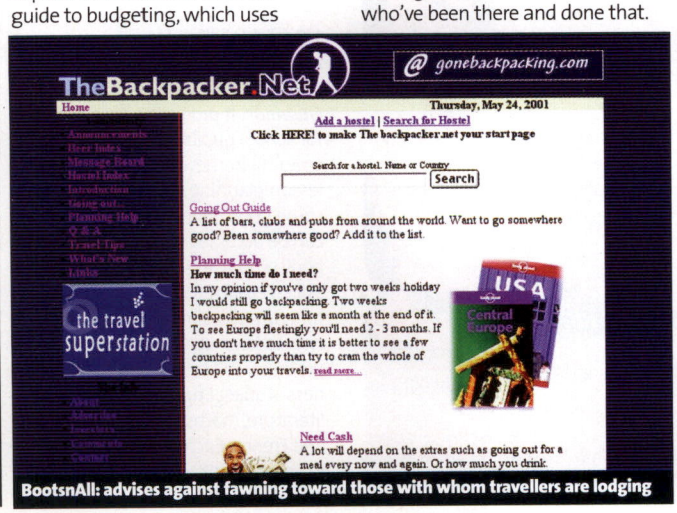
Although this site seems to be aimed predominantly at American backpackers visiting Europe, it has plenty to offer Brits planning to explore the continent. Even the guide to budgeting, which uses only US dollars, has plenty of advice that will translate into any currency. Most of the articles are first-hand accounts of travellers' own experiences and generally offer either interesting tales or nuggets of advice learned from their own misfortunes. Travellers' Favourite Places might include a few too many teenage effusions, but the comments in their hostel reviews make useful reading. There are also tips on getting into travel writing and a huge range of clearly categorised links.

BOOTSNALL .COM

www.bootsnall.com

★★★

The sardonic humour which peppers many of this site's authoritative articles will help you keep your feet on the ground: Morocco's Top Ten Tips recommends whisky and cigarettes as tip currency for locals; 'Don't go totally overboard and kiss arse', reminds the article on being a lodger in a foreign country. Listed unassumingly towards the bottom of the menu is the Traveller's Toolkit, a directory for all aspects of travel which offers both articles and links to other useful sites. The Odds 'n' Ends section is an example of the occasionally poor organisation here, but it's worth perusing the summaries for specialist topics. The excellent interactive programme which allows you to get an instant price quote for your customised multi-stop route is, frustratingly, for US users only, but the rest of the site has something for all travellers looking for advice from those who've been there and done that.


TheBackpacker.Net
@ gonebackpacking.com
Home
Thursday, May 24, 2001
Add a hostel | Search for Hostel
Click HERE! to make The backpacker.net your start page
Search for a hostel. Name or Country
Search
Going Out Guide
A list of bars, clubs and pubs from around the world. Want to go somewhere good? Been somewhere good? Add it to the list.
Planning Help
How much time do I need?
In my opinion if you've only got two weeks holiday I would still go backpacking. Two weeks backpacking will seem like a month at the end of it. To see Europe fleetingly you'll need 2 - 3 months. If you don't have much time it is better to see a few countries properly than try to cram the whole of Europe into your travels. read more...
the travel superstation
Need Cash
A lot will depend on the extras such as going out for a meal every now and again. Or how much you drink.

BootsnAll: advises against fawning toward those with whom travellers are lodging

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials

My destination begins with... A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z HELP
If your screen is not big enough to fit the a-z bar above Click here.
cheapflights.com
FLIGHTS
HOT DEALS!
trip planning
accommodation
car hire
insurance
last minute
short breaks
holidays
cruises
BOOKING/ SEARCH ENGINE
about us
feedback
email alerts
site map
cheapflights™ .com
The best source of bargains from the UK and Ireland since 1996
Deal of the Day
Dubai
£269 inc. tax
Rtn from Heathrow
dep 31 May - rtn 10 Jun
Ibiza
£59 inc. tax
Rtn from Manchester
dep 31 May - rtn 07 Jun
Click Here for these and other amazing flight deals
WIN! 20 free flights to the USA and Europe. CLICK HERE
british midland bmi
Check out our flights-only mailing list!

CheapFlights.com: with a name like that, what do you expect it to be about?

TOP ONLINE FLIGHT DEALS

A2bTravel.com
www.a2btravel.com
'Britain's biggest online travel information and booking resource' has flights leaving from across the UK and Ireland.

MyOwnPrice.com
www.myownprice.com
This site asks how much you're prepared to pay and then tries to match it. Very useful.

Deckchair UK
www.deckchair.com
Comprehensive flight-finder.

CheapFlights.com
www.cheapflights.com
Where thrifty surfers go for flights; packages and late deals.

DESTINATION INFO

Virgin Net Travel – City Guides
www.virgin.net/travel/cityguides
Provides all the information you'll need for a short break.

Rough Guides
www.roughguides.com
From the publishers of the well-established guidebooks.

Lonely Planet Online
www.lonelyplanet.com
Let the travel experts guide you around your destination.

Beeb.com – BBC Holiday
www.holiday.beeb.com
Offers advice on everything you'll need for a perfect break.

ACCOMMODATION

Holidayleaders.com
www.holidayleaders.com
A global directory of villas to rent.

Smooth Hound Systems
www.smoothhound.co.uk
Cheap UK B&Bs and hotels.

Rough Guides: quite smooth really

CottageNet UK
www.cottage-net.ndirect.co.uk
Self-catering database for the UK and Ireland.

LAST-MINUTE BREAKS

Lastminute.com
www.lastminute.com
The original and still the best for every kind of last-minute escape.

Shenfield Travel
www.shenfieldtravel.co.uk
A thorough site packed with great deals. No online booking.

DOS AND DON'TS

Tips 4 Trips
www.tips4trips.com
1,000 handy 'tips for trips'.

Foreign & Commonwealth Office – Travel Advice
www.fco.gov.uk/travel
Get info on countries before setting off.

MAILING LIST

Pick up tips and advice on travelling light with your backpack with the Backpacking Light list from ***www.topica.com***.

CHAT ROOM

Find someone to travel with at ***www.passportwilltravel.com***.

NEED MORE? **Useful travel addresses** The Directory p92

FOCUS:// Find a course

Horses for courses

Expand your mind, online or off, with our guide to the best places to pick up some knowledge

LEARN FREE

www.learnfree.com ★★★★★

The free online courses at Learn Free use VidBook guides – self-contained micro-sites on over 250 topics. The site's slogan is 'No cost know how' and it certainly fulfils this promise, aiming to educate you in almost every area imaginable. Each VidBook contains pictures and videos to help you learn with the minimum of stress. Need to learn how to upholster a chair? No problem. Not only can you watch how it's done, but you'll also be offered separate courses on the basic skills needed first – how to strip the chair to its frame, how to select the best quality fabric for the job and how to make cushions. You'll even find a guide to setting up your sewing machine before you begin. To say this site is exhaustive is an understatement.

BEGINNERS

www.beginners.co.uk ★★★

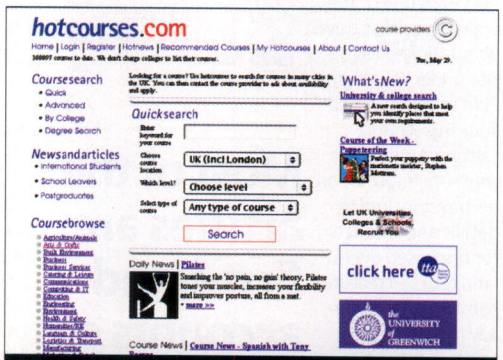
As well as over 250 professional online Internet and computer courses available for an annual membership fee, Beginners also offers a series of free courses on a range of IT subjects, from simple Web technologies such as HTML to complex ones like WAP. It's not all techie stuff, though; you'll also find tutorials to help you get to grips with more straightforward bits and pieces such as cookies and explanations of key terms. There are also software tutorials for a gamut of applications including Web graphics programmes and simple word processing tools, and the Menu Workshop shows you how to build better menus for your Web site using interactive elements and images. An added bonus of a paid subscription is access to over 35,000 pages of training resources.

@ If you have to bookmark one...

HOTCOURSES

www.hotcourses.com ★★★★★

If we were to list every way you can filter courses on this site, we'd probably be here until Christmas. Here you'll find details of an incredible 160,000 courses from over 1,000 organisations, offering everything from puppetry to a diploma in earth science. Clicking on a main category allows you to select the subject you want to study, where you want to do it (only a few can be taken online), and when (such as part time, at weekends or full time in the week). You can then view a list of courses matching your requirements. As well as a host of helpful articles for school leavers and postgraduates, there are recommended courses and a section especially for international students. 'My Hotcourses' is a particularly useful feature, allowing you to save in one place the details of all the courses you're interested in. Simply click on 'Add to my HotCourses' when you find one you like; your choice is then saved on your computer as a cookie so that it's at hand for quick reference whenever you return to the site. Which you will, given its usefulness.



Hotcourses: more courses than a meal at the Savoy

OPEN UNIVERSITY

www.open.ac.uk ★★★★

With this site the Open University has effectively created a definitive guide to home learning. It's no surprise, given that OU was probably the first institution for home learning, enabling ordinary people to study in a way that fitted around their job or other commitments. You can still witness those early days by switching on BBC2 first thing on a Saturday morning to see ancient, time-worn film of nutty professors in kipper ties and Jarvis Cocker glasses. In real life, the Open University has updated just like everyone else, but its postal and selected online degree courses are still among the best available. The site lists all the OU's regional centres, which you can visit to get started, as well giving details of the support you can expect to get during your course.

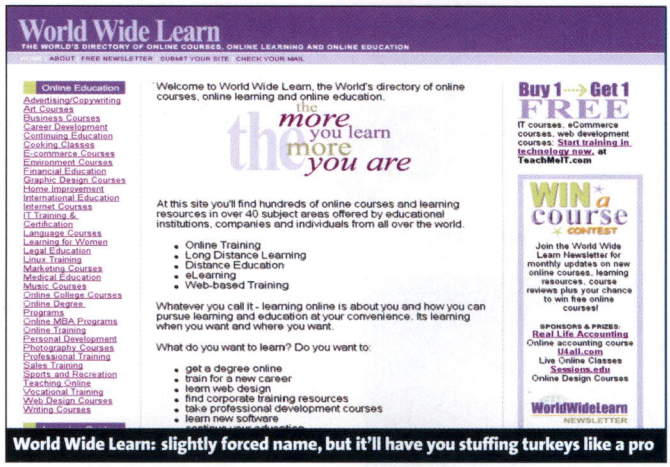
Bamber couldn't wait to try his luck at the OU's end-of-term disco

LEARN.CO.UK

www.learn.co.uk ★★★★

Learn is a new venture from *The Guardian*. It promotes itself as a site for school pupils and teachers alike, covering homework, revision and lesson planning, but there are also some good online courses which can be accessed and used by anybody who wants to better their skills. Perhaps the most popular use for Learn's lessons will be for parents to keep up with their child's progress. The courses cover business studies, English language and literature, maths, geography, science and French. Each category lists topics in syllabus order but you can always dip into what you need to

WORDS: DAN GRABHAM; PICTURES: GRANADAMEDIA


World Wide Learn
THE WORLD'S DIRECTORY OF ONLINE COURSES, ONLINE LEARNING AND ONLINE EDUCATION
Online Education
Welcome to World Wide Learn, the World's directory of online courses, online learning and online education.
the more you learn more you are
At this site you'll find hundreds of online courses and learning resources in over 40 subject areas offered by educational institutions, companies and individuals from all over the world.
Online Training
Long Distance Learning
Distance Education
eLearning
Web-based Training
Whatever you call it - learning online is about you and how you can pursue learning and education at your convenience. Its learning when you want and where you want.
What do you want to learn? Do you want to:
get a degree online
train for a new career
learn web design
find corporate training resources
take professional development courses
learn new software
Buy 1 Get 1 FREE
WIN a course
CONTEST
WorldWideLearn
World Wide Learn: slightly forced name, but it'll have you stuffing turkeys like a pro

brush up on. Maths, for example, starts with numbers and shapes, working through to algebra and Pythagoras's theorem. The lessons are brilliantly executed, and you can test your knowledge as you go.

WORLD WIDE LEARN

www.worldwidelearn.com ★★★

As its somewhat contrived name suggests, this is a global directory of courses and ways to learn on the Net. It offers details of an extensive range of tuition, from degree-level courses to a tutorial on how to publish your own e-zine. The amusing Field Trips column provides links to humorous and useful sites to complement your chosen subject area. It's a very American site, but while many of the courses offered may be inappropriate, there are some gems to be found, such as How To Roast A Turkey – surely essential worldwide. Many of the courses advertised here do charge, but if you're going to learn something properly it might be worthwhile.

HERO

www.hero.ac.uk ★★★★

This Government site may use a rather unexpected acronym for its name, but when you learn that it stands for Higher Education and Research Opportunities, it all makes sense. And so does this site, a portal intended to be the main gateway to the UK's higher education system and seeking to widen access to university education. It's completely foolproof and, unlike most of the other Government Web sites, it doesn't look too bad, either. There are hundreds of links for students and tutors alike, plus the usual batch of information on British universities and the courses they offer. The site also includes a variety of education and research features, plus information for businesses aiming to get involved in learning.

THE ADULT UNIVERSITY

www.adultu.com ★★★

The Adult University (is there a Child University somewhere?) provides both free and fee-based learning, with lessons conducted on the Net via 'classrooms' (chat rooms) – sign up, pay the fee and start learning at your own PC. The classrooms make for quite a relaxing way to learn, although the AU accepts that it feels quite strange at first. As on many of the other sites, there are courses on a huge variety of topics, from writing short stories to metaphysics. There's an email list for regular updates and message boards so you can chat to your fellow students. There's only one problem: the site is based in the US, so time differences will mean that for some lessons you have to get up at 4am. Who said learning was supposed to be fun?

Chat room classrooms are a very relaxing way to learn

LEARNDIRECT

www.learndirect.co.uk ★★★

This Morning sponsor LearnDirect looks almost barren at first glance, but there is a wealth of courses. You have to pay, but many of them can be taken online, although there are centres around the country to help get people started. There's a particularly strong line in computer and Net courses, including tuition for core software such as Word or Internet Explorer, as well as courses to help you build and look after your own business. If you want to find out more without actually signing up for a course, take a look at the Tasters section. Online courses can be started almost immediately, and there's always a helpline if you need a bit of extra guidance.

@CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials

QUOTATIONS AND PROVERBS

Bartleby.com
www.bartleby.com
Quotes to spice up essays, letters and speeches.

Famous Quotations Network
www.famous-quotations.com
Search for quotations by country or author.

EXAM RESOURCES

Topmarks Education
www.topmarks.co.uk
Help with hundreds of topics for students of all ages.

Revisiontime.com
www.revisiontime.com
Useful links for various subjects.

Schoolsnet
www.schoolsnet.com
Award-winning education site for students, parents and teachers.

ENCYLOPEDIAS

Online Dictionaries, Glossaries and Encylopedias
stommel.tamu.edu/~baum/hyperref.html
Large list of online resources.

Webopedia
www.pcwebopedia.com
Specialises in IT topics.

FunkandWagnalls.com
www.funkandwagnalls.com
Selection of historical articles and a perspective on modern events.

CONVERTERS AND SYMBOLS

MegaConverter 2
www.megaconverter.com/mega2
Convert just about any measurement to another.

Symbols.com
www.symbols.com
Online list of graphic symbols.

LEARN ABOUT COMPUTERS

About Computing
home.about.com/compute
A vast amount of information on every aspect of computing.

Learn That
www.learnthat.com
General site including computing help for beginners and novices.

LEARN A LANGUAGE

Travlang
www.travlang.com
Learn to get by in almost any language imaginable.

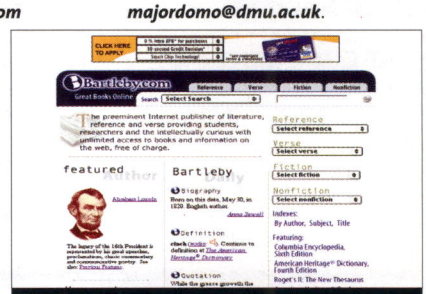
Cyberitalian
www.cyberitalian.com
Step-by-step, with sound files.

NEWSGROUP

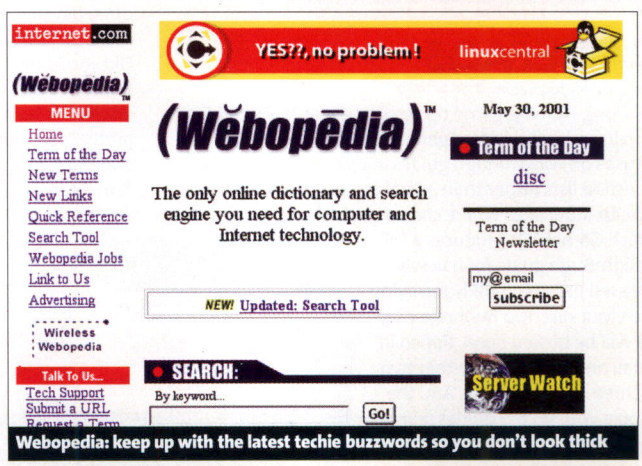
aus.education.open-learning
If you've embarked on an open learning course, why not discuss your work with others?

MAILING LIST

Find out more about online learning by sending an email marked 'info onlearn-l' to ***majordomo@dmu.ac.uk***.



Bartleby.com: quotes, references, features and ideas



Webopedia: keep up with the latest techie buzzwords so you don't look thick

NEED MORE? **Useful addresses for kids** The Directory p92

FOCUS:// Tips, cheats and advice

Games people play

Jump straight from useless newbie to unbeatable games master with the help of these advice sites

Careful how you apply your new-found knowledge

CHEAT CODE CENTRAL

www.cheatcc.com ★★★★

Cheat Code Central claims to be the biggest online cheat database, but declines to tell us who's doing the counting. Still, it offers an impressive library of gaming dishonesty. The site's totally focused on cheat codes, though, and doesn't offer anything in the way of tips or guides. The cheat information is accurate, all-encompassing, and up to date. Cheat Code Central tries to indicate which regions cheat codes will work in, too, so you shouldn't have to waste time trying out American and Japanese codes on UK consoles. You have to endure a pop-up advert if you want to access cheat codes for the very latest games, but otherwise, this site is easy to use, clearly laid out, and pretty much straight to the point. They don't waste space with rubbish cheats, either.

COMPUTER AND VIDEO GAMES

www.computerandvideogames.com

★★★★

This news Web site also does a fine line in cheats, tips and walkthrough guides, organised by console. It's by no means all-inclusive, but the tips are up to date and have all been tested on UK consoles. The tips section is squirrelled away at the bottom of the page, but links through to pages and pages of clearly written, informative tips and cheats. The site is updated daily, although the tips section has a tendency to remain dormant for days at a time. Still, when the tips do appear, they're focused on new, popular games, and are obviously written by people who know their stuff.

CHEAT HEAVEN

www.cheatheaven.co.uk ★★★

This site offers sparse, functional cheats listings for most new consoles, including PCs and Macs. They don't differentiate too much between import and UK games, so you may find that some of the cheats don't work with your console. They also have an irritating habit of listing games on the cheat directory which come up as 'Cheats coming soon' when you click through to the individual page. Still, that's only a problem with a minority of the games here, and most major titles will have full tips on here, with a fair amount of walk-through-type information as well.

Codes.IGN.com: Americans cheat more

CODES.IGN.COM

codes.ign.com ★★★

This mind-bogglingly vast reservoir of game cheatery is well-designed, highly glossy and frighteningly up-to-the-minute. Unfortunately, the free cheats on offer here are American cheats, and UK versions of the same games will often have

@ If you have to bookmark one...

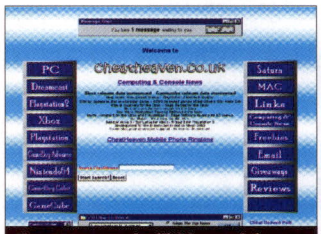
GAMEFAQS

www.gamefaqs.com ★★★★★

This long-running game tips resource is an essential first stop if you're looking for game advice on the Web. It focuses on walkthrough guides and Frequently Asked Question lists rather than actual cheats, but also provides links to other sites where cheats can be had. The speed at which GameFAQs produces a full walkthrough guide for a newly released game is frankly terrifying. Even four-disc, 100 hour role-players will be busted open, tipped in detail and written up within two or three days of release. And the people who do the guides aren't employed by GameFAQs either – they're just doing this for fun. Scary. The quality of the guides is usually stunning, too. Because GameFAQs allows anyone to post guides, competition often develops to produce new guides that are even more exhaustive than the huge ones already posted. Did you know that if you hit the chickens in Game Boy *Zelda* 20 times with your sword, you're attacked by an enormous flock of killer fowl? Nor did we. The site is pretty spartan on the design front, but it's clearly laid out and covers every console released since the dawn of time. They're even still updating their FAQs for the Atari Jaguar, despite the fact that only about 12 people on the planet own Jaguars. These people are perfectionists to the point of insanity. Even if you've completed a game already, it's worth checking out GameFAQs, because they will usually have found some obscure hidden bits or special bonuses that no sane person would ever stumble across. Like, did YOU find the secret level where you had to shoot the cartoon children in *Doom II: Hell on Earth*?

GameFAQs: perfection to the point of insanity

WORDS: ROB WAUGH; PICTURES: KOBAL



Cheat Heaven: devilishly good tips

different cheat codes, or just not have the cheats at all. (American gamers are far less tolerant of tough bits in games, apparently.) Sadly, that means that about half of the cheats on here won't work with UK games, and finding out which ones that applies to is a matter of trial and error. Also irritating is the fact that you have to become a member of IGN.com to access the cheats. The IGN membership form is several pages long, and filled with tiny tickboxes that you have to untick if you don't want your inbox buried in a blizzard of spam emails.

CHEATING PLANET

www.cheatingplanet.com ★★★

This well-designed Gamespy site contains cheats and walkthrough info for a vast array of games, with the emphasis on PC titles. Game tips are well-written and clearly presented, and they've unearthed a wealth of inside info like the secret option to make the girls' chests more wobbly in *Dead or Alive 2* on PS2. Most of the cheats on offer here are for American games, though, so if the cheat you're looking at is of the button-sequence variety, there's a strong chance it won't work.

TOTALGAMES.NET

www.totalgames.net ★★★

The site design isn't brilliant, and the loading times are positively criminal, but if you can find the tips section, it's a belter. This is a UK site, so all the codes are legit, and they include codes and tips on most new titles across all the popular consoles. Loading up the site takes an agonisingly long time, though, and getting through to the tips section for the console you want isn't always easy. The site seems slightly ashamed of its tips section, so the links to it are usually hidden away in the bottom left corner of each page. If you dig deep enough to find it, though, it's one of the biggest reservoirs of those hard-to-find UK cheat codes.

GAMESPOT

www.gamespot.co.uk ★★★★

In among all the news and reviews, Gamespot's UK division actually offer quite a tasty selection of game guides, with the emphasis on new PC titles. There's a few PlayStation »

LINKS ;-) CONSOLE WARS

Tiny Advance is a great leap

After the death of Dreamcast and a lacklustre first six months from PlayStation 2, the next generation console war looks set to hot up in earnest this autumn. Suddenly, Nintendo's Game Cube has leapt from the drawing board into the real world, and has a confirmed price and US release date, three days ahead of Microsoft's Xbox in early November. Both those consoles will be available in the UK early next year, with Microsoft already committed to providing fast online gaming from launch. The Game Cube boasts about the same power as PS2, where Xbox is about double the power. UK prices are to be confirmed.

Microsoft is keeping Xbox-hungry gamers updated constantly through ***www.xbox.com***, while Nintendo is staying relatively quiet. Expect an explosion of Game Cube news on game sites like ***www.ign.com*** around the time of Nintendo's Space World show in September, when the game giant promises to have a huge number of fully working titles on display, including the new *Mario* game.

There's only one game console of importance

Even PlayStation 2 is now hitting its stride, despite PlayStation boss Ken Kutaragi calling down a monsoon on his own parade by starting to drop hints about a possible PlayStation 3. Games like *Police 911*, in which you duck and dive in front of a digital camera to avoid gunfire, are finally beginning to show off the kind of innovative software that Sony promised from launch, and while ***www.playstation-europe.com*** remains a news site only, Sony has reaffirmed its commitment to online gaming through PS2. In Japan, Sony has test-launched broadband links between arcades, which has been widely seen as a dry run for their gaming portal over there. When this will translate into online gaming for Europeans is anyone's guess, but with Xbox and Game Cube raising the game, Sony can't rest on its laurels over the next six months.

For this summer, though, there's only one game console of any importance – Game Boy Advance. It's about half the size of the original Game Boy, and nearly as powerful as a PlayStation. There are some cracking games already available – both *Mario Advance* and *GT Advance* are instant classics, and sci fi racer *F-Zero* can be played as a four-player link-up off one cartridge if you've got enough Game Boy Advances. You can gaze in wonder and awe at the Advance at ***www.nintendo.com***. Over in Japan, you can already use your Game Boy Advance for limited Web browsing, but it's still restricted to registering high scores and such – online gaming through mobile phones is a possibility in the future, though.

Even sorry old Dreamcast, which Sega announced it was ceasing to produce this March, still seems to have some life in it. This summer sees the release of *Sonic Adventure 2*, *Crazy Taxi 2* and *Unreal Tournament*, all top titles, and the online portal ***www.dreamarena.com*** is still going strong, despite rumours of its impending demise.

In fact, the death of Dreamcast could be the best thing that ever happened to Sega, taking the company away from something it was plainly rubbish at, namely making consoles, towards something that it has always excelled at – making games. Sega's games are now appearing on other consoles, with classic puzzler *Chu Chu Rocket* already on Game Boy Advance, and *Crazy Taxi* on PS2. Some of Xbox's biggest launch titles like *Jet X Radio* and *Panzer Dragoon* are Sega games. For a full idea of Sega's genius for games, check out the latest titles on ***www.sega.com***.

And even the doomed Dreamcast itself is being belatedly hailed as a brave console innovator. The head of Microsoft's Xbox division talked glowingly of Sega's Dreamarena as an online gaming pioneer, and admitted to being highly impressed with how it handled the tricky task of running a game like *Quake 3* through Dreamcast's 33.6Kb modem. And many of Sega's innovations are now being incorporated into new consoles as they launch. The head of Xbox announced that all online Xbox games will be voice-enabled, so that gamers can hurl abuse at each other, bellow wounded defiance or even just chat pleasantly as they play. The first console to achieve voice-enabled gaming was, of course, Dreamcast. A clever little thing. It's just a pity that no-one ever bought one.

Advance and Game Cube: purple people pleasers

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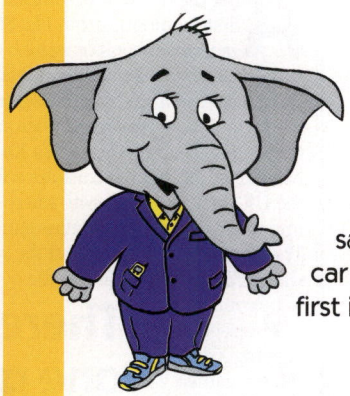

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FOCUS:// Tips, cheats and advice <cont>

and PS2 titles in there, but most of their guides are for strategy and action titles on PC. Within the guides, you'll often find cheat codes as a last section, but most of the guides are so all-inclusive and so well-written that you shouldn't need to cheat. By no means every PC game is covered, but they make an effort to tip most new ones which are complex enough to warrant a big walk-through guide.

Guides so good, you don't need to cheat

PLANET QUAKE

www.planetquake.com ★★★★

No cheats as such, but a staggering library of free levels, modifications and character models for all three *Quakes*. The *Quake* obsessives who produce this site have a pretty keen eye for what works and what doesn't deathmatch-wise, so most of the upgrades and downloads on here are of the highest quality. A full *Quake* modification (a programme that alters the gameplay or looks of *Quake*) will often take up to 150Mb, so you'll need a fast Net connection to download what's on offer here. The site is updated daily, so it's usually up to speed with whatever's the new big thing in the ultra-violent world of *Quake*.

CODE JUNKIES

www.codejunkies.com ★★★★★

This is a constantly updated database of codes for Datel's cheat cartridges like the Action Replay and the X-Port, but the codes will also work with rival cheat carts like Blaze's X-Plorer. For the uninitiated, Action Replays are either discs or cartridges that you can plug into just about any game console, which crack open the game's code so you can load up with extra ammo or lives or get your hands on secret characters, levels and so on. Action Replays and X-Plorers come pre-loaded with codes for most games, but codes for newer games are published on Code Junkies. It also has a database of ready-made game saves that you can download through your PC into console memory cards via devices like X-Port or Blaze's MPXChanger, which is a great last resort if there's a bit in a game which you just can't get past. Updates are regular, and they're all from Datel's busy team of professional game-busters, so you can be sure they're pretty damn accurate.

TVG

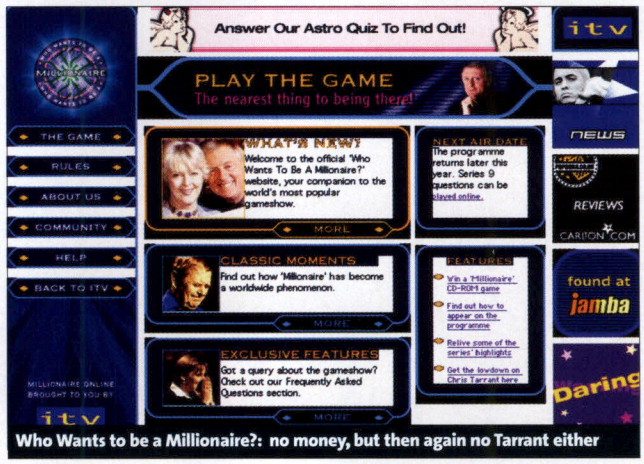
www.totalvideogames.com ★★★

This site boasts a huge library of reader-contributed tips, but doesn't differentiate between Japanese, US and UK games, so you may find the codes simply don't work. The codes aren't checked by the site's staff, either, so there's no guarantee that the cheats featured aren't some dweeb's idea of a joke. Still, TVG was one of the first sites to post any tips for *Gran Turismo 3* on Japanese import, and the info up was useful – and correct. TVG covers cheats and tips for most currently available consoles, although the library isn't up to much if you're after tips on an older or obscure title.

Totalgames.net: UK codes you can trust among a huge library of tips

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials


Answer Our Astro Quiz To Find Out!
PLAY THE GAME
The nearest thing to being there!
THE GAME
RULES
ABOUT US
COMMUNITY
HELP
BACK TO ITV
WHAT'S NEW?
Welcome to the official 'Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?' website, your companion to the world's most popular gameshow.
MORE
NEXT AIR DATE
The programme returns later this year. Series 9 questions can be played online.
CLASSIC MOMENTS
Find out how 'Millionaire' has become a worldwide phenomenon.
FEATURES
'Win a 'Millionaire' CD-ROM game
Find out how to appear on the programme
Relive some of the series' highlights
Get the lowdown on Chris Tarrant here
EXCLUSIVE FEATURES
Got a query about the gameshow? Check out our Frequently Asked Questions section.
itv
news
REVIEWS
found at jamba

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?: no money, but then again no Tarrant either

PLAY GAMES

Gamezone Online
www.gamezone.com
Links to hundreds of online games, almost all of them free.

Who Wants to be a Millionaire?
www.itv.co.uk/millionaire
Play online: it's 'the nearest thing to being there', with the bonus of not sitting opposite Chris Tarrant.

It's Your Turn.Com
www.itsyourturn.com
Play chess, checkers, backgammon online for free with a human opponent. No downloads necessary, and you can play a single game over days, weeks or even months.

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www.gamesstreet.infront.co.uk
Excellent deals on a range of games.

Game
www.game-retail.co.uk
The shop of the High Street store.

Chips
www.chipsworld.co.uk
Probably the best selection of console games on the Web.

Gameplay
www.gameplay.com
Large selection of games, with free delivery.

Gameshops
www.gameshops.co.uk
Traditional and non-computer games.

DEMOS

Happy Puppy
www.happypuppy.com
New demos and shareware games.

3DFiles.com
www.3dfiles.com
Demos and shareware downloads.

Games Domain: news and features

Acdownload.com
www.acdownload.com
Loads of great downloads.

GAMING NEWS

Games Domain
www.gamesdomain.co.uk
News and games-related features.

Game Daily
www.gamedaily.com
Get the latest news from this site via an HTML newsletter.

Daily Radar UK
www.dailyradar.co.uk
News updated every 15 minutes.

IGN.Com
www.ign.com
More news, reviews, features, interviews.

NEWSGROUP

rec.games.video.sony
A place to voice your passion for Playstation and Playstation 2.

MAILING LIST

Get a weekly mail-out courtesy of Gamescenter.com, delivering the latest reviews, tips, tricks and cheats. Subcribe via
www.topica.com

CHAT ROOM

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www.ign.com
Chat with other game players.

NEED MORE? Useful gaming addresses The Directory p92

FOCUS:// Bill-paying online

Wave goodbye to stamp-licking hell

Power to the people

Spend a few minutes online, and you'll no longer see red every time you get the gas bill

POWERGEN

www.powergen.co.uk ★★★★

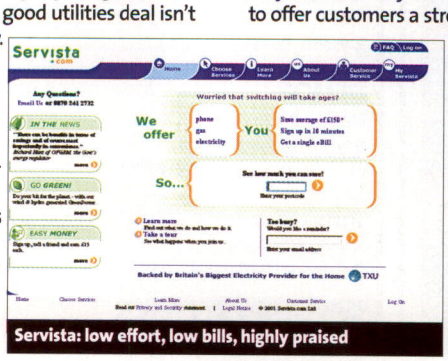
It seems that wherever you go on the Powergen site you'll get cash-back and savings thrust upon you: up to £50 for signing up online, £50 worth of Lego vouchers, a night out at Jongleurs, the list goes on. Once you've got a rough idea of the services Powergen offers (gas, electricity, telephone – it's also an ISP), head for the cost calculator, armed with a pile of the previous year's utility bills. We clocked up a possible saving of over £150 across all three major services. And if you sign up to its ISP, Surf and Save (which has always performed pretty well in our ISP listings), you get further discounts on your utility bills based on the amount of time spent online.

@ If you have to bookmark one...

SERVISTA

www.servista.com ★★★★★

According to Servista, 3.3 million of us know we could save money on our utility bills by paying them via the Internet, but we don't bother doing anything about it. Why? Well, let's face it, finding a good utilities deal isn't the most exciting online activity. Given the choice, we'd all rather spend time hunting down a cut-price week in the sun or some cheap CDs; even securing cheaper car insurance is marginally more glamorous than the prospect of saving a few pounds on the gas or 'leccy. With this in mind, Servista has taken exactly the right approach by providing a site that offers a low-effort way to sign up (it should only take about 10 minutes) and a low-maintenance way of then paying for utilities (via a single e-bill that can be paid online). You can pick one or choose all three of the three main services (telecoms, gas and electricity), and Servista reckons it can save the average household £100-£152 a year (bear in mind that these are average savings). The brains behind Servista have obviously thought carefully about exactly how the service can use technology to offer customers a streamlined service. You can check out your bills at any time, enter meter readings, change payment methods or add another service. But the site also stands out from the rest by offering the best explanation as to why we can get good utility deals and how it all works. Added to all this, our sister title *Revolution* gave Servista its customer service award this year, and if you sign up a friend, £15 is credited to their bill and to yours.



Servista: low effort, low bills, highly praised

VIRGIN ENERGY

www.virgin.com ★★★★

If you're the kind of person who gets a kick out of knowing that your sausage dog draught excluder is saving you a penny a week, then Virgin Energy is for you. As well as a potential saving of £50 per year, Virgin rewards you for using less energy, although you must be with them for over a year to demonstrate your abstemiousness. OK, it's only £1 for every percent you save, but the energy-saving tips section shows that lowering your central heating by one degree centigrade can reduce your fuel bill by 10 percent. As you'd expect from Virgin, it's a slick site and claims to let you sign up in five minutes. That's five minutes less than Servista claims, so you've already saved five minutes electricity and phone time.

AMERADA

www.amerada.co.uk ★★★

A quick and easy-to-use calculator demonstrated that our potential dual-fuel savings would be around £110 (including almost 25 percent on our gas bill), which was enough

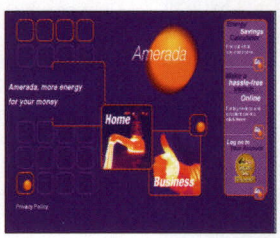
WORDS: SUE WEEKES; PICTURES: CORBIS

make us want to find out more. However, we found it quite a strain trying to make out the site's white text on a purple background, especially when there seemed to be so much to read (we suggest it takes a lead from Powergen's more graphical approach). Amerada features advice on safety and energy-saving and when we visited the site it was gearing up to launch its new Get Energised section, with special deals on everything from gadgets to days out. Despite reservations about design, the savings certainly made it worth looking into.

NPOWER

www.npower.com ★★★

According to npower, if we boiled just the amount of water we needed every time we fancied a brew, we'd save enough energy to light every street lamp in the UK. The online utility sites do their best to make us feel like a nation of wastrels. In this case, you can put your money where your guilty conscience is by opting for npower's Evergreen package, which won't cost you any more but does ask for a yearly £5 donation (about 10p a week) towards the development of sustainable and renewable forms of electricity. Once again, there's a handy calculator and, in common with many utility sites, the plan is to expand to new areas like insurance.

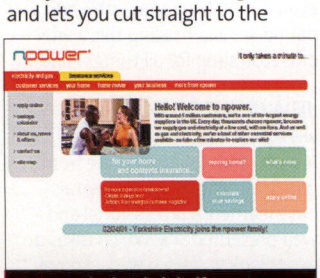


Get advice on safety and energy saving

NORWEB ENERGI

www.energi-online.co.uk ★★★

If you're thinking about changing your utilties supplier and also plan to book a holiday (and who isn't?) then try Norweb Energi's offer – up to 15 percent off holidays with 200 top tour operators. It's a nice way to coax the apathetic (that's most of us) online to sort out our utilities, and there are also discounts on days out to zoos and theme parks. The site itself doesn't offer too many frills but it's well designed and lets you cut straight to the important bits, such as the savings calculator and how to switch your accounts from existing suppliers.



npower: the kettle is half-empty

BRITISH GAS

www.gas.co.uk ★★★

Not the best URL if you're also offering electric and telecoms, but when you have the marketing clout of British Gas it's unlikely to be a long-term problem (especially when you can afford ads featuring a flotilla of flying baths). An incentive for those considering opting for its electricity supply comes in the form of £15 off your first bill. It's a minimalist site, but click the modest menu bar in the top left-hand corner and you get the full extent of its offerings. This includes the obligatory energy-saving tips, but we picked up a few new ones; its tip when we dropped by was to hang silver foil (shiny side inwards) behind radiators on outside walls to reduce heat loss.

SEEBOARD

www.seeboard.com ★★★

You might expect to find an illustration of a house with arrows showing how much energy is lost through the roof (35 percent), walls (35 percent) and windows (10 percent); Seeboard provide it. The site doesn't have a calculator to work out your savings, but a rather posh-sounding Personal Savings Estimate, which seems to do much the same thing. It also features an interactive map showing tariffs in different areas across the country, and can lay claim to offering the first energy loyalty card, the Thankyou card, which offers discounts on mini-breaks, cinema tickets and a few online shops.

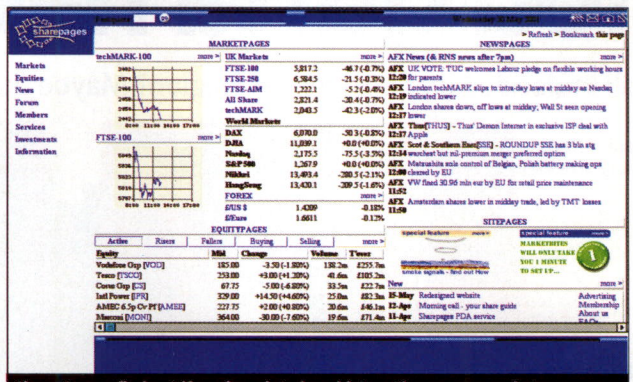
EASTERN ENERGY

www.easternenergy.co.uk ★★★

Here's another company steeped in utilities tradition, and its site does a good job of telling you what Eastern Energy is all about and what it can do for you. If you believe in taking the green option, you can opt for EcoPower, where you donate 50p a week to the development of renewable energy sources (take that, npower). And if you like the idea of taking a little back for yourself – and there's nothing wrong with that – you'll earn a point on your Tesco Clubcard for every pound you spend on Eastern Energy gas or electricity. There are £15 and £30 discounts for signing up online to one or both utilities.

@CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials



Share Pages: find out if you're minted or skint on the money markets

INVESTING

Citywire.co.uk
www.citywire.co.uk
Company news and advice.

The Motley Fool UK
www.fool.co.uk
One of *the net*'s favourite sites, offering helpful advice for the learner investor.

Ask Figaro
www.askfigaro.com
Compare financial products' results here.

www.barclays-stockbrokers.co.uk
Real-time share dealing from one of the biggest names in banking.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Interactive Investor International
www.iii.co.uk
Advice for individual investors.

Tax Assist Direct Ltd
www.taxassist.co.uk
Help with the taxman for small business and investors.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Investment Week
www.invweek.co.uk
Top monetary advice from the in-depth *Investment Week*.

hemscott.NET
www.hemscott.net
Get access to a veritable goldmine of analysis from this easy-to-use, no-nonsense site.

This Is Money: and if you like it you'll look after it

MONEY NEWS AND SHARE PRICES

FT.com
www.ft.com
The mother of all money sites, from the makers of the pink-paged financial bible.

Sharepages.com
www.sharepages.com
News from all the markets in a quick-glance, easy-to-navigate format.

SHARE TRADING

Stocktrade
www.stocktrade.co.uk
Keep your finger on the pulse with this site, which offers real-time prices.

Barclays Stockbrokers

BUDGETING

This Is Money
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Hold on to your purse strings with a large range of interactive facilities.

Guardian Unlimited – Money
money.guardian.co.uk
Right-on money guide with news and features.

NEWSGROUP

uk.finance
Advice on a broad range of topics.

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NEED MORE? **This month's bargains** Dealfinder p30
Useful money addresses The Directory p92

FOCUS:// Religion

You gotta have faith

Still undecided on questions of religion? Maybe the Internet can help...

Nuns: will do anything to be popular

@ If you have to bookmark one...

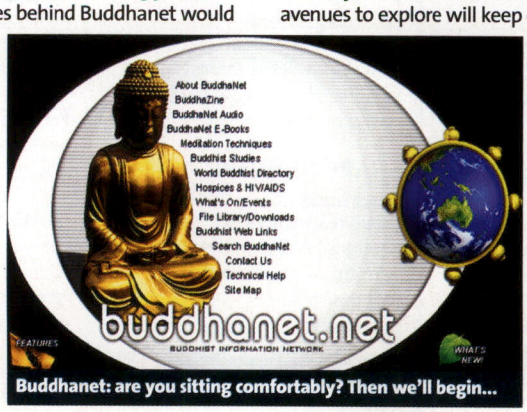
BUDDHANET

www.buddhanet.net ★★★★★

Were the population's choice of religion decided purely on the basis of who had the best Web site (which would, admittedly, be a fairly odd way of establishing your spiritual beliefs), the devotees behind Buddhanet would be converting thousands. Quite simply, there is no better sales job for any religion than this all-encompassing Buddhist portal, built with all the loving diligence you'd expect.

In fact, the only problem you'll have with Buddhanet is knowing where to start. Among the many thrilling features is an Interactive Wheel Of Life, in which you can learn the guiding principles of Buddhism in a Flash movie; crosswords and puzzles to while away the hours between meditation; a worldwide directory of places of worship with full contact details and meeting times; and a huge reference library of articles and scripts, including downloadable meditation guides. There's even a kids' section featuring a Buddha colouring book and a cut-out-and-keep Buddha for the mantelpiece. No, honestly, there is... The sheer wealth of information and avenues to explore will keep even the most dedicated surfer occupied for hours, lost in a colourful and frequently fascinating maze of insight. Nobody could accuse the Webmasters here of being stuck in the past – multimedia and interactivity are used in abundance in the clean, crisp design.

It's official, then – Buddhism is the new rock 'n' roll. Pull up a cushion, cross your legs and surf to a calmer karma.



Buddhanet: are you sitting comfortably? Then we'll begin...

VATICAN OFFICIAL SITE

www.vatican.va ★★★

You probably wouldn't expect the Pope's cyberspace presence to be all that thrilling – and you'd be right. The official Vatican site leaves a lot to be desired on the design front, too, but it does hide a wealth of info on worldwide Catholicism. When you delve beyond the blank interface you get a travel guide to the Vatican City, plenty of historical documents of interest and religious holidays. Missives from His Holiness mingle with transcripts of services and proclamations and the site has an oddly old-fashioned feel to it, in sharp contrast with the more modern offerings elsewhere, but if it's info you're after look no further.

SIKHISM HOME PAGE

www.sikhs.org ★★★★

A brilliant, no-frills introduction to Sikhism which should leave you fully informed and educated: the Introduction section gives an overview of Sikh traditions, history and terminology plus a guide to pronounciation of tricky Sikh names, while the calendar will ensure you're up to date on your holidays and observances. Click on Resources and you'll find hundreds of links, a reading list and an explanation of the Sikh alphabet. Fancy a pray? The downloadable Real Audio files of daily prayers will furnish you, and the biographies section makes sure you'll know what you're on about. Just about everything you could want to know under one roof.

THE HINDU UNIVERSE

www.hindunet.org ★★★★

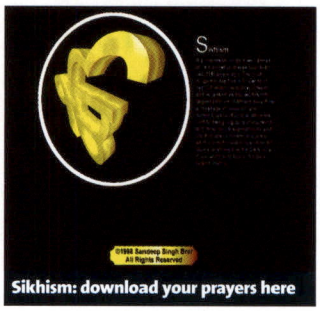
Niceness abounds at The Hindu Universe, which does a great job of bringing Hindus across the world together in one vast online community. There are links to prayers and charities, plus thoughts and meditations submitted by users, alongside a good introduction and a handy FAQ which debunks myths and provides plenty of links. The daily news wire service does a good job of rounding-up Hindu-related happenings, and works in conjunction with the calendar of events which gives a background to festivals and important dates. There's even a mobile phone centre and a dating service, making this a vital one-stop shop for all things Hindu.

JEWISH.CO.UK

www.jewish.co.uk ★★★★

Jewish.co.uk set a template from which all other religious portals have learned: a professional and well-presented site, which takes a wider look at Jewish life, acknowledging Jewish celebrities, music,

WORDS: ROBERT JEFFERY



Sikhism: download your prayers here

businesses and dating alongside religious traditions and festivals. Interaction is the key here, with a full dating service and business finder, user-contributed top 10s and people finders. The most popular feature is Ask The Rabbi, in which rabbis tackle emotional, religious and moral issues with a dash of humour. Well worth reading, whether you're Jewish or curious.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND

www.church-of-england.org ★★★

If you've ever wondered where the Church of England stands on a variety of modern issues, look no further: the kindly souls have posted their thoughts on just about everything under the sun here from homosexuality and euthanasia (very bad things, unsurprisingly) to cohabitation, which is alright, apparently. The other major facet of the site is a huge church locator which finds you your nearest place of worship in seconds, leaving no more excuses for not turning up on a Sunday. Prayers and service details are provided, too, and though the occasional attempts at cutting-edge technology and terminology are embarrassing, they do mean well...

MUSLIM DIRECTORY

www.muslimdirectory.co.uk ★★★

An innovative idea this, with the aim of linking Muslim businesses and organisations across the UK in one huge database – and it works, excepting the odd dodgy link or slow-loading page. The mosque finder includes not only locations, but prayer timetables, too, so you'll know when to turn up, and the Islam section covers the fundamentals of the religion in reasonable detail. News and contemporary issues, however, are conspicuous by their absence, leaving the site feeling slightly unfinished, though the links should point you in the right direction to continue your studies.

BELIEFNET

www.beliefnet.com ★★★★★

Attempting to build a portal encompassing every religion under the sun is a daunting, not to say dangerous, task – after all, sects have been known to have their differences in the past. Still, Beliefnet – catchphrase 'We all believe in something' – is more than just a worthy undertaking, it actually works. Each separate religion or belief – and we're talking everything from Catholicism to atheism, including an atheists' prayer circle – has its own separate area featuring articles, news and resources, though all users come together for message boards and chats on the major issues. Interviews with the likes of Marilyn Manson, plus columnists contributing controversial critiques, make this a fascinating and lively site which achieves the impossible.

CHURCH OF SATAN

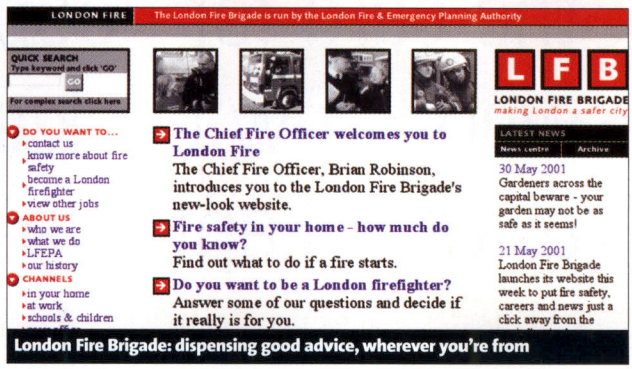
www.churchofsatan.com ★★★

As the official Church of Satan portal points out, Satanism hasn't actually about the worship of Beelzebub: in fact, it's got more to do with self-preservation and freedom from law than ritual sacrifices. Not that the site does that much to dispel the myth with huge pictures of followers dressed in horns and capes. You'll find dozens of articles on the history and meanings of Satanism, plus links and interviews with prominent devotees. Not for the faint-hearted, but essential for the curious.

Church of Satan: holds regular fancy dress parties to boost the congregation

@ CLASSIC SITES TO BOOKMARK

Web essentials


LONDON FIRE
The London Fire Brigade is run by the London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority
QUICK SEARCH
Type keyword and click 'GO'
GO
For complex search click here
DO YOU WANT TO...
contact us
know more about fire safety
become a London firefighter
view other jobs
ABOUT US
who we are
what we do
LFEPA
our history
CHANNELS
in your home
at work
schools & children
The Chief Fire Officer welcomes you to London Fire
The Chief Fire Officer, Brian Robinson, introduces you to the London Fire Brigade's new-look website.
Fire safety in your home - how much do you know?
Find out what to do if a fire starts.
Do you want to be a London firefighter?
Answer some of our questions and decide if it really is for you.
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making London a safer city
LATEST NEWS
News centre
Archive
30 May 2001
Gardeners across the capital beware - your garden may not be as safe as it seems!
21 May 2001
London Fire Brigade launches its website this week to put fire safety, careers and news just a click away from the
London Fire Brigade: dispensing good advice, wherever you're from

GOVERNMENT

10 Downing Street
www.number-10.gov.uk
Features the latest news and facts, and an opportunity to join a discussion forum. Don't miss the Webcam, which offers panoramic views of Downing Street.

Department of Health Website
www.doh.gov.uk
Read up on the Department's policies. Also provides links to the latest health-related reports.

Scottish Parliament
www.scotland.gov.uk
Up-to-the-minute news bulletins, and a chance to share your views.

National Assembly for Wales
www.wales.gov.uk
Features news, press releases, the latest policies, and links to other Welsh offices.

ROYALTY

The British Monarchy
www.royal.gov.uk
Find news on the royals past and present, photos and tour info.

The Royal Archive
royalarchive.com
Features news, biogs and a shop.

The Prince of Wales
www.princeofwales.gov.uk
News, galleries and a database of HRH's speeches.

Royal Families of the World
www.royalfamily.com
Provides links to both official and unofficial sites of monarchies all over the world.

WEDDINGS

Confetti.co.uk
www.confetti.co.uk
A big site for a big day.

Wedding Guide UK
www.weddingguideuk.com
Huge but easily navigable site including everything the groom and Best Man will want to know.

Web Wedding
www.webwedding.co.uk
Features an easy-to-use interactive planner.

Weddings.co.uk
www.webwedding.co.uk
Couples wishing to marry abroad can find the legal requirements for over 20 countries here.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

London Fire Brigade
www.london-fire.gov.uk
With safety tips and photos.

Police
www.policecouldyou.co.uk
Recruitment site for the boys and girls in blue, with local links.

Web Wedding: helps you plan the best day of your life

NEWSGROUP

alt.religion.christian.20-something
Twentysomething Christian chat.

MAILING LIST

Subscribe to friendly debate and chat with fellow aestheists by sending an email to ***godless-subscribe@topic.com***.

CHAT

See ***www.mustard.com/sangha.html*** for a modern take on Buddhism.

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THE INTERNET NOW

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Communication www.freeserve.com/mobile

New tunes for Motorolas

Now Motorola users, too, can enjoy great ringtones from Freeserve

Users of Motorola mobile phones are now able receive the extensive range of ringtones available at *www.freeserve.com/mobile*. Until recently, the service has only been available to Nokia and Sagem phone owners.

Many mobile users find it irritating and embarrassing to reach for their phone when it rings in a public place, only to find that the phone that's ringing is a neighbour's. Personalising your phone with an individual ringtone – instead of using one from the limited and now familiar selection which comes ready-installed on new mobiles – means that you won't confuse the sound of your mobile with anyone else's.

Your ringtone is also a good excuse to express your personality; perhaps you'll choose something funny, or something trendy. And if you're worried you won't be the only person to choose classics like the James Bond theme or *Match of the Day*, you can make sure you always stand out from the crowd by keeping an eye out for new ringtones at Freeserve Mobile. There are hundreds to choose from, with categories including Film and TV Themes, Football Fans' Favourites and Rock and Pop. You can listen to each ringtone, as it will sound on your phone, before you decide to download it.

Stand out from the crowd with your own ringtone

Ringtones are quick and easy to download. Simply take note of the name and code number of the ringtone you want, and call 0906 957 9 957 (calls cost 75p a minute and last about two minutes). Then follow the instructions to have the ringtone sent as a code to the mobile of your choice.

For the full range of ringtones for Nokia, Sagem and Motorola phones, and for personalised logos for Nokia phones, go to *www.freeserve.com/mobile*.

Choose from a vast selection

PICTURES: CORBIS, RETNA

Money www.freeserve.com/money

Get insured in minutes

Arranging travel insurance for your holiday abroad can take just a few minutes, thanks to the interactive facilities available on the Freeserve Money channel (*www.freeserve.com/money*); buying your foreign currency is just as easy. Instant quotes and options to buy online mean that the practical aspects of your trip can be taken care of with just a few clicks of the mouse. The only thing you need to worry about is how much sun tan lotion to take with you.

continued over >>

Enjoy a few risks on holiday

Money www.freeserve.com/money

Get insured in minutes

>> (continued from page 87)

Even if you've left it to the last minute, you can still buy travel insurance to cover you and your suitcase as little as three days before you take off. It takes just minutes to receive an online quote from the insurers on the Money channel, and your cover will be set up as soon as you've submitted your credit card details. And if you're one of the nine million Brits who take their car abroad with them every year, you can also get a quick and

For all your money matters

competitive online quote for motor insurance including suitable cover outside the UK. That way, you can make the most of having your own car without having to worry about how you're going to cope if you have a breakdown or an accident.

It might seem safe enough to leave buying your foreign currency until you get to the airport, but are you going to be that laid back when you're stuck at the back of the queue at the bureau de change and your flight's beginning to board? Avoid the panic by buying your money in advance from *www.freeserve.com/travel/money*. Your cash or traveller's cheques will be ready for collection from the airport you're leaving from; or you can have your money sent directly to your home. You can buy your money up to 60 days in advance, so use the rate tracker to pick the best time to buy.

Of course, you're always going to find something you fancy that you didn't budget for. So Money will find you the best credit card for your needs, too. Get the most from your money at *www.freeserve.com/money*.

PICTURES: RETNA

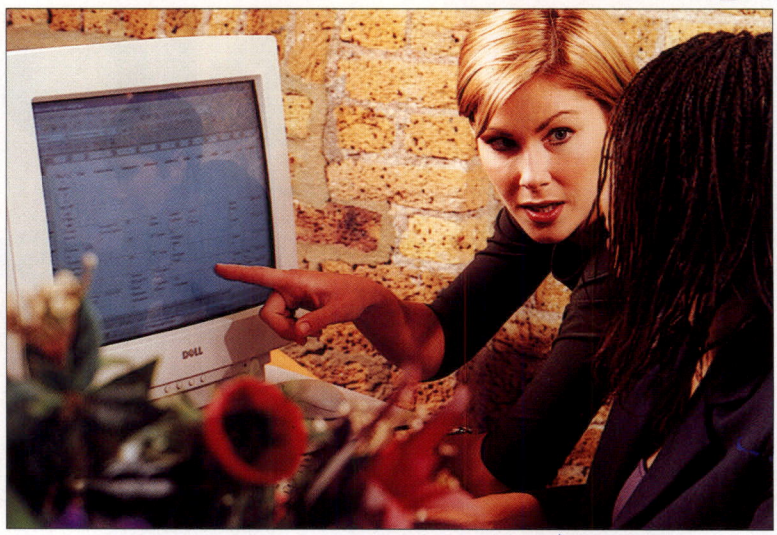
Business www.clearlybusiness.com

Help your business help

Small businesses missed out on a staggering £140 billion of work last year because they lacked the necessary advice, resources and expertise, according to new research by Clearlybusiness (*www.clearlybusiness.com*). With access to impartial advice, as well as stronger marketing and financial skills and better trained staff, many businesses could have enjoyed greater profits.

But thanks to expert online advice, tools and services available from Clearlybusiness, all businesses now have the opportunity to be in a position where they can generate and accept many more sales leads.

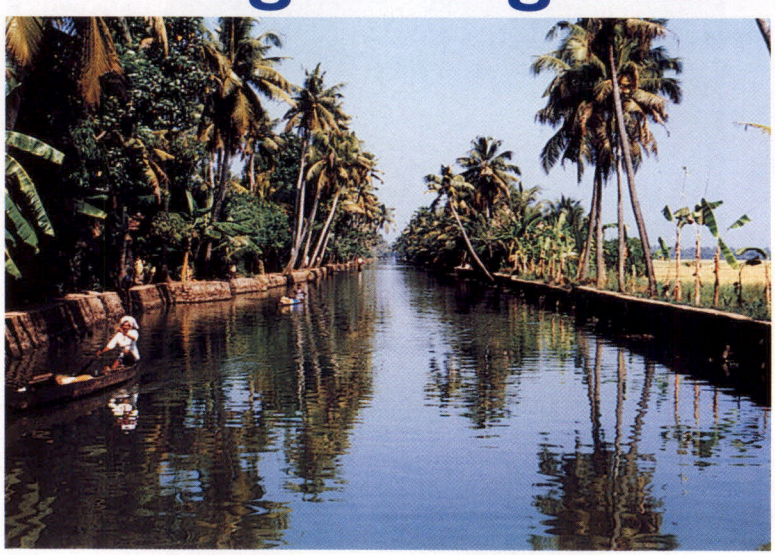
One of the key services offered by Clearlybusiness is access to the biggest source of mailing lists in Europe, taking businesses directly to potential customers. An online market place of suppliers, a database of local businesses and an online business community aim to help businesses establish new contacts and business relationships to get their job done as efficiently and effectively as possible. Businesses wanting to keep their skills in-house will also find a range of business and technical online training courses to develop their own human resources.



Properly training your staff will help to increase their efficiency

But lack of contacts and skills were not the problems revealed by Clearlybusiness's research. Many businesses also need better cashflow and sound advice. Late payment from clients can be detrimental

A change is as good as a rest


A serene and sultry canal in Kerala – an exotic and still unspoilt holiday destination

If you haven't already booked this year's summer holiday, there's still time if you go to Freeserve Travel (*www.freeserve.com/travel*). And to help you choose a destination, the Travel channel experts have revealed a range of locations to provide total distraction from the stresses of life back home.

An African safari might seem an obvious enough idea, but what you probably won't know is that the place to do it is Namibia. The extraordinary wildlife and landscape here are still unspoilt, and local people have yet to become jaded by tourists.

Thousands of miles away is another region which has managed to resist the blight of tourism: the southern Indian state of Kerala. This exotic but affordable region offers magical lagoons, lakes and canals, and is famous for Ayurvedic massage, an ancient holistic treatment guaranteed to revitalise you.

There's nothing original about the Costa del Sol. But next door to its high-rise hotels and crowded beaches is the lesser known Costa de la Luz, taking in 100 km of sand dunes, tiny fishing villages, friendly hotels and wonderful restaurants. It's on the Atlantic, so the air's a bit cooler and winds a little rough – perfect conditions for wind-surfing!

Another well-kept European secret is Croatia. No longer a war zone, it guarantees sunshine without the crowds, and when you tire of exploring the thousand islands off the coast, there are pretty towns such as Trogir, Hvar and medieval Dubrovnik to visit.

With its year-round nightlife, fantastic shopping opportunities and luxury hotels, Dubai makes a

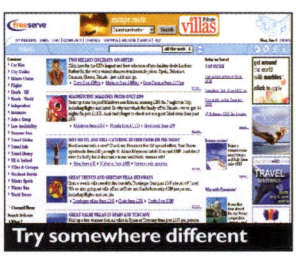
itself

to a business's bank balance, but with effective credit control it can also generate additional profits. Clearlybusiness's credit management tools enable businesses to collect debts quickly and efficiently and to check the credit record of customers and suppliers, ensuring that cash flow stays positive.

And of course, nothing beats first-hand experience. There's plenty on offer from the Clearlybusiness Community. Businesses owners and managers can fill any gaps in their knowledge with advice from an industry specialist or someone who has already 'been there, done that', thus saving you the time and trouble of solving your problems through your own trial and error.

These are just some examples of how Clearlybusiness can help. Find more on resourcing and all other aspects of running a small business at *www.clearlybusiness.com*.

Travel www.freeserve.com/travel



Try somewhere different

perfect getaway destination at any time of year, with a touch of authentic Arabia still to be found in the old gold and spice souks.

Give the kids a break with a difference: a cruise which caters for children. The Disney Cruise Line's tour of the Caribbean, for example, includes a visit to a private island with a special kids' beach. And with plenty for them to do on board, too, you can relax while they have fun.

Book a holiday in any of these wonderful destinations at Travel, where you'll also find special offers, last-minute deals, bargain air fairs and value-for-money accommodation. It's all waiting for you at *www.freeserve.com/travel*.

Shopping www.freeserve.com/shopping

SHOPPING

Summer barbecues begin with the Ashes

Shopping has everything for cricket lovers this month

The major sporting event this month is the Ashes series, and with the England cricket team on a roll since their victory against the West Indies last year, it'll be a nailbiting few weeks as we wait to see if they can win back the trophy after so long. A great way to calm your nerves is by using the event as an excuse to invite your friends round for a few beers and a barbecue.

There are three weekends during the series in which to exercise your barbecuing skills, so you'll want to get the right equipment to make the job easy and fun. Freeserve Shopping has an extensive range of barbecues to choose from in the Homes and Gardens section (*www.freeserve.com/shopping/homes*). You'll find charcoal burners in the form of the familiar kettle-style apparatus, or as a folding portable set. If you want to make a real feature of yours, there's a wonderful Mediterranean-style masonry affair. And if you don't have space for a permanent fixture, you can always use a disposable barbecue instead; they come in various sizes. There are gas barbecues, too, plus all the accessories you'll need, such as fuel, tongs, food holders and cleaning equipment. And if you need help getting started, you'll find tips on how to light and clean your barbecue.

GET THE BEST VIEW OF THE SERIES

If you're inviting a bunch of mates round to watch the series, it's vital that you have a big enough television for everyone to get a good view: you might as well listen to it on the radio if you've only got a 14" screen. A larger set doesn't have to break the bank if you get it from the Electrical department (*www.freeserve.com/electrical*). Here you'll find excellent deals on television sets, and with a big picture and crisp, clear sound you'll feel all the atmosphere of being at the match while enjoying your barbecue and the comfort of your own home. Remember, this is a crucial event for England, so make sure you're fully prepared to make the most of it. And if your love of cricket takes you onto the green itself, you'll be able to get completely kitted out at Sport and Leisure (*www.freeserve.com/leisure*), where you'll find plenty of bargains not just for cricket gear but all sorts of sports equipment and loads of stylish top-brand names.

KEEPING THE KIDS AMUSED

Kids love the summer holidays, but only if they're busy. Give them constant entertainment by visiting Gameplay (*www.freeserve.com/shopping/videogames*) and Toys (*www.freeserve.com/shopping/toys*) and making the most of the latest deals. But if what they – or you – need is a break away, you'll find a holiday to suit your every need on Freeserve Travel (*www.freeserve.com/travel*), with plenty of special offers and late deals to choose from. From booking your flight, finding a hotel to buying your travel insurance, you can do it all online at Travel.

Shop in minutes online

Keep your eye on the Summer Bonanza at Shopping throughout the summer for more great details and weekly competitions. And for news of all the latest offers, you can subscribe for free to the Shopping newsletter at *www.freeserve.com/shopping*.

Use the Ashes as an excuse to buy a new barbecue

PICTURE: IMAGE BANK

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What you'll get from Freeserve

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Everyone uses the Internet in different ways. Some use it for work; others browse in the evenings at home; still more just check their email a couple of times a day. So Freeserve has a choice of great-value packages to suit every kind of user. For detailed information about AnyTime, HomeTime, No Ties and our high-speed service Freeserve Plus, visit *www.freeserve.com/time*.

EMAIL

Email allows you to send messages all over the world, at any time of the day or night, and receive a reply within seconds. With Freeserve, email is completely free; all you pay for is the cost of the connection to the Internet.

MOBILE INTERNET

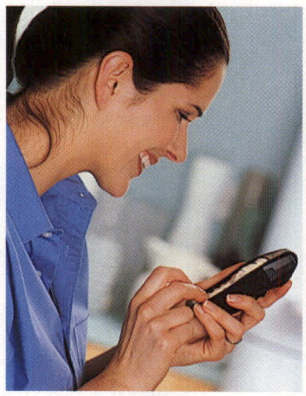
Because email is sent to and from computers, there's always the worry that you're missing vital messages whenever you're away from your PC. But with a mobile Internet (or WAP) phone, you can access your emails whenever you're away from your PC. To find out how, visit *www.freeserve.com/mobile*.

TALKING EMAIL

If you don't have a mobile Internet phone, you can still access your emails when you're away from your computer – by using Speechmail, a clever service which reads your email messages to you. Find more information at *www.freeserve.com/communications*.

YOUR OWN WEB SPACE

Once you've started looking around the Internet, chances are you'll be keen to build your own site. That's easy when you become a Freeserve member. We'll give you a massive 15 megabytes of free space in which to create your own site. The software on the free installation CD, which you can use to sign up as a member, makes it easy to get your site up and running.



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THE BEST CONTENT

As well as offering so many great services, Freeserve is dedicated to bringing you the very best content on the Internet and collecting it all on the Freeserve Today page at *www.freeserve.com*. Make Today your homepage to get an instant digest of all the latest news, weather and sport whenever you log on to the Internet.

FREESERVE FOR EVERY PART OF YOUR LIFE

Freeserve has 18 excellent channels, one for every part of your life, from Lifestyle to Careers, Sport to Business, Health to Money; Shopping has everything you could possibly want, and there's a whole channel for Women. And our email newsletter will keep you up to date with everything that's going on at Freeserve. *www.freeserve.com*

Sign up online at www.freeserve.com or use the free Freeserve installation CD available from Dixons, Currys, PC World and The Link – or call 0800 976 8890 to have it delivered to you direct.

A-Z CHANNEL GUIDE

WITH 18 CHANNELS TO CHOOSE FROM, THERE'S SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE

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Health Freeserve Health is full of information, advice and medical news to help you and your family stay in tip-top condition.	**Learning** From primary through to A-level and beyond, our interactive environment makes learning easier for all ages.	**Lifestyle** The Lifestyle channel is an exclusive magazine covering every aspect of your social and personal life, and much more.	**Money** Keep your finances in order with expert advice from Money, where you'll find tips on everything from ISAs to mortgages.	**Motoring** Get on the road with the Freeserve Motoring channel, your one-stop shop for all your motoring needs.	**News and Weather** Get tomorrow's papers today with this superb service delivering the latest news and weather.
Property From finding the right mortgage to sorting the decorators from the cowboys, on Property you'll find everything for your home.	**Search** Use Search to find anything on the Internet, including businesses and services, domain names and items	**Shopping** At Shopping you can find a huge range of items, from flowers or food to a CD or a computer. Look out for exclusive bargains, too.	**Sport** Football, rugby, tennis, cricket, motorsport, golf – the list goes on. Whatever your sport, you'll find the latest news and results here.	**Travel** Visit the Travel channel for instant access to a database of 70,000 flights and holidays worldwide as well as sensational last-minute deals.	**Women** For features, information and advice, Web women need look no further than the Freeserve women's channel, icircle.com.

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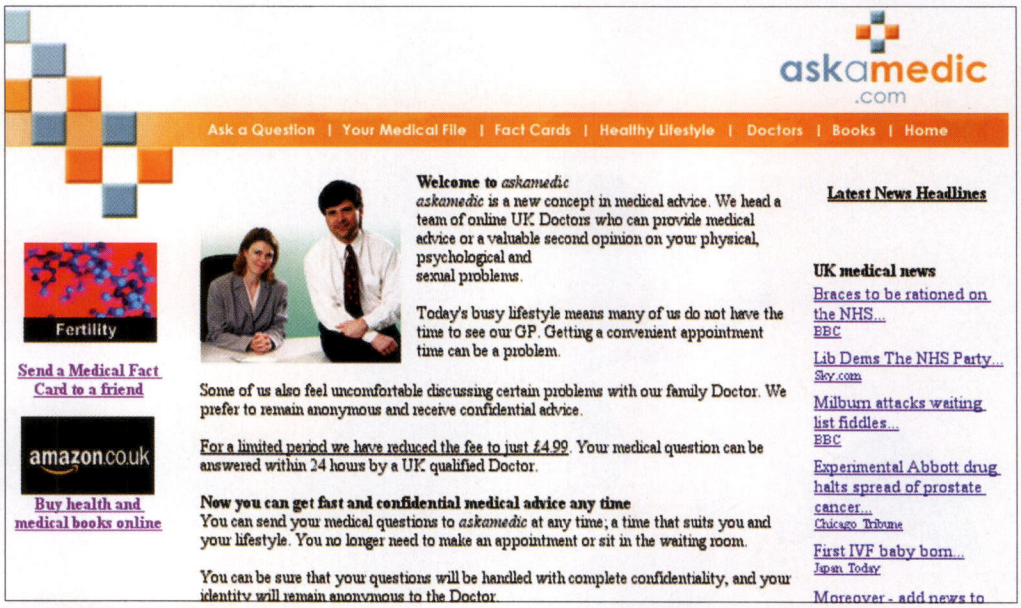
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Don't fret if your GP can't see you for weeks. For a small fee (£4.99 until October), Askamedic (***askamedic.com***) guarantees to give you a response to your medical query within 24 hours. Many health sites post their readers' problems on a noticeboard, which can be somewhat off-putting. At Askamedic your question and the doctor's verdict remain completely private, with your personal file accessible on the site only by you and the medics. If you're still shy, use a fictitious user name when you register, although your email address will be required along with your credit card details, age and sex.

You'll also find medical news on the site, plus advice on Healthy Living and several Medical Fact Cards covering complaints such as impotence, irritable bowel syndrome, RSI and asthma, which you can email to friends and family. NHS fans might not be happy about paying for immediate medical advice, but it's comforting to have the option if you're desperate. ***www.askamedic.com***

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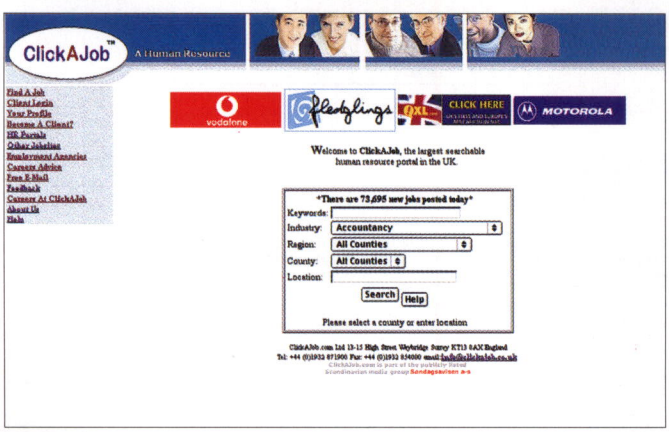
Kidscom ***www.kidscom.com/orakc/Mousers/mouse.html***
Nickelodeon ***www.nickjr.com***
Sesame Street
www.sesamestreet.com/preschool
Surf Monkey ***www.surfmonkey.com***



JOBS NEW ENTRY

JOBS THAT COME TO FIND YOU

ClickAJob claims to be the largest searchable job database in the UK, and with figures such as 60,000 job vacancies on the site at any one time (when we visited there were 73,695), with 13,000 of those in IT and Internet-related positions alone, it certainly has a trumpet to blow. Select the industry you want to work in plus your preferred location and a keyword, and a list of suitable positions pops up immediately, with links through to full job descriptions. Register as a member and the site will email you every time a suitable post is added to the site. Definitely a time-saving alternative to poring over the appointment sections every week.
www.clickajob.co.uk

AA: 12 steps to alcohol-free heaven

8 plus
AJ Kids ***www.ajkids.com***
Anything!Student
www.anythingstudent.com
Atkidz.com ***www.atkidz.com***
BJ Pinchbeck Homework Helper
www.bjpinchbeck.com
ChildU ***www.childu.com***
Disney.co.uk ***www.disney.co.uk***
EduWeb ***www.eduweb.co.uk***
Family Education
www.familyeducation.com
The History Channel
www.historystudystop.co.uk
MatMice ***www.matmice.com***
Paw Island ***www.pawisland.com***
Pupiline.net ***www.pupiline.net***
S-Cool! ***www.s-cool.co.uk***
StudentUK ***www.studentuk.com***
SurfMonkey ***www.surfmonkey.com***
Teen Advice ***www.teenadvice.net***
Teen Scene ***www.teen-scene.com***
Thunk ***www.thunk.com***
Wizziwiz.co.uk ***www.wizziwiz.co.uk***
Yahooligans ***www.yahooligans.com***

<LAW>
Desktop Lawyer
www.desktoplawyer.freeserve.net
Divorce Online
www.divorce-online.co.uk
Law Assure ***www.lawassure.co.uk***
Law Rights ***www.lawright.co.uk***
Law Solutions ***www.lawsolutions.co.uk***
Legaldocs ***www.legaldocs.com***
Legalshop ***www.legalshop.co.uk***
UK Law Online
www.leeds.ac.uk/law/hamlyn

<MOBILES>
Top Networks
BT Cellnet ***www.btcellnet.net***
One 2 One ***www.one2one.co.uk***
Orange ***www.orange.co.uk***
Virgin ***www.virginmobile.com***
Vodafone ***www.vodafone.co.uk***

Ringtones & Logos
a2bwap ***www.a2bwap.com***
Be Mobile ***www.yellphone.com***
Jippii! ***www.jippii.co.uk***
MonsterMob ***www.monstermob.com***
Ringtones Online
www.ringtones.co.uk
tones4fones ***www.tones4fones.com***
YourMobile ***www.yourmobile.com***

<MONEY>
Financial & investment guides
Citywire ***www.citywire.co.uk***
DigitalLook.com ***www.digitallook.com***
Eye4Money ***www.eye4money.com***
Financial Times ***www.ft.com*** »

Interactive Investor ***www.iii.co.uk***
Money Unlimited
www.moneyunlimited.co.uk
Motley Fool ***www.fool.co.uk***
Sharepages ***www.sharepages.com***
Stocktrade ***www.stocktrade.co.uk***
TaxAssist Direct Ltd
www.taxassist.co.uk

<MOTORING>
Car manufacturers
Audi ***www.audi.co.uk***
BMW ***www.bmw.co.uk***
Citroen ***www.citroen.co.uk***
Ferrari ***www.ferrari.it***
Fiat ***www.fiat.co.uk***
Ford ***www.ford.co.uk***
Honda ***www.honda.co.uk***
Jaguar ***www.jaguarcars.com***
Lotus ***www.lotuscars.co.uk***
Mazda ***www.mazda.co.uk***
Mercedes-Benz
www.mercedes-benz.co.uk
Nissan ***www.nissan-europe.com***
Peugeot ***www.peugeot.co.uk***
Porsche ***www.porsche.co.uk***
Rover ***www.rover.co.uk***
Toyota ***www.toyota.co.uk***
Volkswagen ***www.volkswagen.co.uk***
Volvo ***www.volvocars.volvo.co.uk***

<MUSEUMS & GALLERIES>
Imperial War Museum
www.iwm.org.uk
National Gallery
www.nationalgallery.org.uk
Natural History Museum
www.nhm.ac.uk
Tate Gallery ***www.tate.org.uk***

<MUSIC>
Artists, DJs & radio
The Beatles ***beatles.com***
Britney Spears ***www.britneyspears.com***
David Bowie ***www.davidbowie.com***
Eminem ***www.eminem2000.com***
Geri Halliwell ***www.geri-halliwell.com***
Gilles Peterson ***gpww.iscool.net***
Gorillaz ***www.gorillaz.com***
Hear'say ***www.popstarsuk.f2s.com***
Radiohead ***www.radiohead.com***
REM ***www.remhq.com***
Vdance ***www.vdance.co.uk***
WOD1.com ***www.wod1.com***
U2 ***www.u2.com***

MP3
BeSonic ***www.besonic.com***
Brand New Music
www.brandnewmusic.com
Clickmusic ***www.clickmusic.co.uk***
Crunch ***www.crunch.co.uk***
Garageband ***www.garageband.com***
Getsigned.com ***www.get-signed.com***
MP3.com ***www.mp3.com***
Popwire ***www.popwire.com***
Vitaminic ***www.vitaminic.co.uk***

Online mixing
DJSounds.com ***www.djsounds.com***
eJay ***www.ejay.com***
Getoutthere ***www.getoutthere.bt.com***
Hitsquad ***www.hitsquad.com***
Home Recording
www.homerecording.com
Mouse Jam ***www.mousejam.com***
Online DJ ***www.onlinedj.com***
Scratch It ***www.turntable.de***
SS7X7 ***www.ss7x7.com***
Turntables ***www.turntables.de***

<NEWS>
Newspapers
Daily Telegraph ***www.telegraph.co.uk***
Guardian Unlimited
www.guardian.co.uk
The Independent
www.independent.co.uk
MegaStar ***www.megastar.co.uk***
The Mirror ***www.mirror.co.uk***
News Of The World
www.notw.co.uk
Scotsman ***www.thescotsman.co.uk***
The Sun ***www.thesun.co.uk***
The Times ***www.the-times.co.uk***

News services
ABC News ***www.abcnews.go.com***
BBC ***news.bbc.co.uk***
CNN ***www.cnn.co.uk***
ITN ***www.itn.co.uk***
NewsNow ***www.newsnow.co.uk***
PA News ***www.pa.press.net***
Reuters ***www.reuters.com/news***

<PEOPLE FINDERS>
Email addresses
Bigfoot ***bigfoot.com***
EmailFinder ***www.emailfinder.com***
Friends Reunited
www.friendsreunited.co.uk

Guardian Unlimited: impressive size

People Site ***www.peoplesite.com***
WhoWhere ***www.whowhere.com***
Yahoo ***people.yahoo.com***

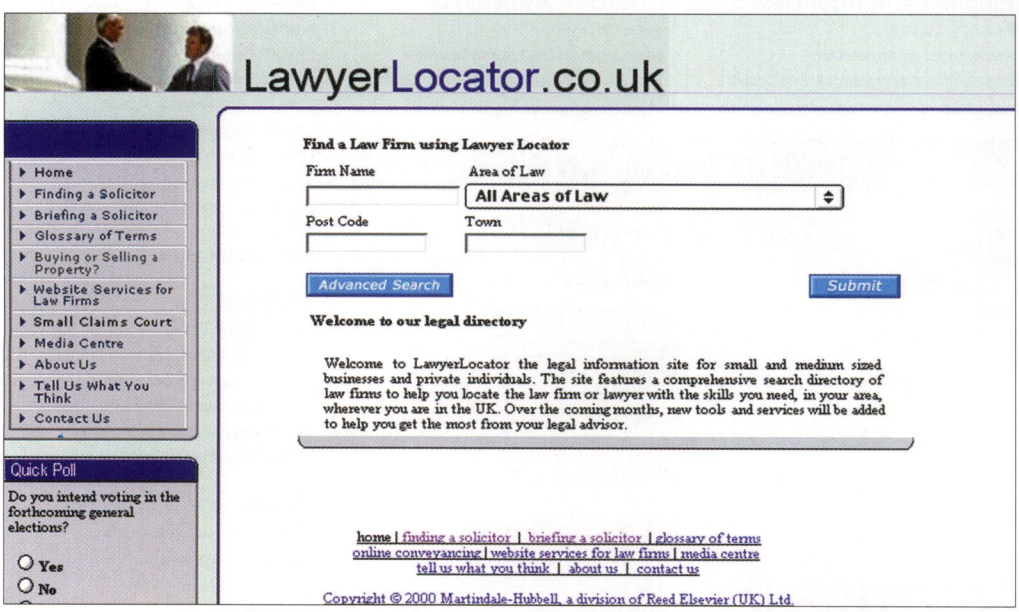
Phone numbers
BT Directory Enquiries
www.bt.co.uk/phonenetuk
Thomson Directories
www.thomweb.co.uk
Yellow Pages ***www.yell.co.uk***

<SCIENCE>
News & updates
BBC Science ***news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/sci/tech/default.htm***
einstein.tv ***www.einstein.tv***
Eureka Alert ***www.eurekalert.org***
NASA ***science.nasa.gov***
New Scientist ***www.newscientist.com***
WhyFiles ***whyfiles.news.wisc.edu***

<SEARCH ENGINES>
AltaVista ***www.altavista.digital.com***
Ask Jeeves ***www.askjeeves.com***
Dogpile ***www.dogpile.com***
Electric Library ***www.elibrary.com***
FAST ***alltheweb.com***
Google ***www.google.com***
HotBot ***www.hotbot.com***
Inter-Change ***www.inter-change.com***
Lycos ***www.lycos.com***
MetaCrawler ***www.metacrawler.com***
Mirago ***www.mirago.co.uk***
Northern Light ***www.nlsearch.com***

<SHOPPING>
Online auctions
Auction Hunter
www.auctionhunter.com
Auction Universe
www.auctionuniverse.co.uk
Bid4sport ***www.bid4sport.co.uk***
eBay ***www.ebay.co.uk***
eBid ***www.ebid.co.uk***
eSwap ***www.eswap.co.uk***
Eurobid ***www.eurobid.com***
Last Minute ***www.lastminute.com***
QXL ***www.qxl.com***
What Am I Bid? ***www.whatamibid.com***

Shopping directories
Best of British ***www.bestofbritish.com***
BritishShopping.com
www.british-shopping.com
Centreshop ***www.centreshop.com***
CleverPants ***www.cleverpants.com***
Coppernob Shopping.com
www.coppernobshopping.com
eDirectory ***www.edirectory.co.uk***
The Gift Delivery Company
www.giftdeliveryco.com
IMRG ***shops.imrg.org***
Inshop.co.uk ***www.inshop.co.uk***


LawyerLocator.co.uk
Home
Finding a Solicitor
Briefing a Solicitor
Glossary of Terms
Buying or Selling a Property?
Website Services for Law Firms
Small Claims Court
Media Centre
About Us
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Contact Us
Quick Poll
Do you intend voting in the forthcoming general elections?
Yes
No
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Firm Name
Area of Law
All Areas of Law
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Town
Advanced Search
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LAW NEW ENTRY

I BOUGHT THE LAWYER

With a name like Lawyer Locator, there's certainly nothing surprising about the service this site offers. But if you've got yourself in a position where you need legal help, it's exactly this kind of clarity and directness that you'll want to ensure you understand your situation and how it proceeds. Like its name, Lawyer Locator is simplicity itself to use. Enter the area of law that concerns you (anything from building and construction to employment, divorce to yacht and pleasurecraft law) with the location you'd like to find your lawyer to view all those that suit your specifications. The Advanced Search allows you to also search for individual solicitors and barristers, as well as law firms, by name. There are several areas offering copious amounts of advice on subjects such as how to decide whether to use a solicitor you've found, how to brief your solicitor, and buying and selling a property. It's all in good, plain English, though there's a helpful glossary if you're still not clear. It's a fast service, too; it takes seconds to search the entire database.
www.lawyerlocator.co.uk

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Island Trading ***www.island-trading.com***
LuxLook.com ***www.luxlook.com***
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Shoppers Universe ***shoppersuniverse.com***
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ShopSmart ***www.shopsmart.com***
Shops On The Net ***www.sotn.com***
Shop Spy ***www.shopspy.co.uk***
Shop Tour UK ***www.shoptour.co.uk***
Splendour.com ***www.splendour.com***
TopUKWebsites ***www.topukwebsites.com***
Shopping Zone ***ukshoppingzone.co.uk***
Virgin Net ***www.virgin.net/shopping***
Virtual Mall ***www.thevirtualmall.co.uk***
ValueMad ***www.valuemad.com***
Wedding List ***www.wedding.co.uk***
Your Wish List ***www.yourwishlist.com***

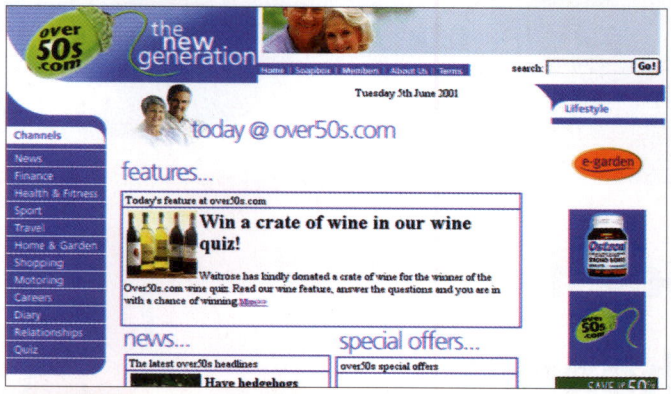
<SOCIETY & FASHION>

Ammo City ***www.ammocity.com***
BeautyLink ***www.beautylink.com***
BeMe.com ***www.beme.com***
BetterPlanet ***www.care4free.net/greenlife***
Boxfresh ***www.boxfresh.co.uk***
Cosmopolitan ***www.cosmomag.com***
Defining Edge ***www.definingedge.com***
Fotango ***www.fotango.com***
Fashion and Beauty Internet Association ***www.fbia.com***
Fashionfile ***www.fashionfile.com***
Fashion Mall ***www.fashionmall.com***
FashionNet ***www.fashion.net***
Lifebyte ***www.lifebyte.com***
Models.com ***www.models.com***
TheRumour ***www.therumour.com***
Top Ten Buys ***www.toptenbuys.co.uk***
Salonweb ***www.salonweb.com***
Style Experts ***www.stylexperts.com***
Vogue ***www.vogue.com***
WooWho ***www.woowho.co.uk***

<SPORT>

FA Premiership clubs

Arsenal ***www.arsenal.co.uk***
Aston Villa ***www.astonvilla-fc.co.uk***
Blackburn Rovers ***www.rovers.co.uk***
Bolton Wanderers ***www.boltonwfc.co.uk***
Charlton Athletic ***www.charlton-athletic.co.uk***
Chelsea ***www.chelseafc.co.uk***
Derby County ***www.dcfc.co.uk***
Everton ***www.evertonfc.com***
Fulham ***www.fulhamfc.co.uk***
Ipswich Town ***www.itfc.co.uk***
Leeds United ***www.lufc.co.uk***
Leicester City ***www.lcfc.co.uk***
Liverpool ***www.liverpoolfc.net***
Manchester United ***www.manutd.com***
Middlesbrough ***www.mfc.co.uk***
Newcastle United ***www.nufc.co.uk***
Southampton ***www.saintsfc.co.uk/index.htm***
Sunderland ***www.sunderland-afc.com***
Tottenham Hotspur ***www.spurs.co.uk***
West Ham United ***www.whufc.co.uk***



SOCIETY NEW ENTRY

BLUE-RIBAND SILVER SURFERS

One of the news stories when we dropped by Over50s.com was a report by Barclays Bank claiming that silver surfers are the fastest-growing group of Net users. The 'new generation' of old dogs learning new tricks have a nice toy to practice with in Over50s, a clean, colourful and easy-to-use site. The tailored content includes news, health and fitness, travel and home and garden. There's a forum and a Relationships channel which offers advice on dealing with love life and family, in addition to the Over50s.com dating service. A site as relevant and simple as this ensures it's never too late to learn all about the Net.
www.over50s.com

Sport A-Z

Athletics ***www.nuff-respect.co.uk***
Autosport ***www.autosport.com***
Cricket ***www.cricket4.com***
Cycling ***www.cycleweb.co.uk***
Extreme sports ***www.soulgear.com***
Fishing ***www.anglersnet.co.uk***
Football ***www.football365.com***
Formula One ***www.itv-f1.com***
Golf ***www.golfweb.com***
Greyhound Racing ***www.wimbledonstadium.co.uk***
Hockey ***www.fieldhockey.com***
Martial Arts ***www.martial-arts-network.com***
Motorsport ***www.autosport.com***
Motorbike Racing ***www.motograndprix.com***
Racing ***www.racingpost.co.uk***
Rugby League ***www.rleague.com***
Rugby Union ***www.scrum.com***
Snooker ***www.snookernet.com***
Tennis ***www.tennis.com***
Wrestling ***www.wwf.com***

<TELEVISION>

TV companies

BBC ***www.bbc.co.uk***
Channel Four ***www.channel4.co.uk***
Channel Five ***www.channel5.co.uk***
E4 ***www.e4.com***
ITV ***www.itv.co.uk***
ONdigital ***www.ondigital.co.uk***
Sky ***www.sky.co.uk***

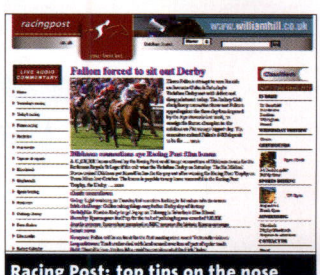
<TRAVEL>

Airlines

Air Canada ***www.aircanada.ca***
Air France ***www.airfrance.com***
American Airlines ***www.aa.com***
Britannia ***www.britanniaairways.com***
BA ***www.british-airways.com***
BM ***www.iflybritishmidland.com***
Buzz ***www.buzzaway.com***
Continental ***www.flycontinental.com***
easyJet ***www.easyjet.com***
Go ***www.go-fly.com***
Iberia ***www.iberia.com***
KLM ***www.klmuk.com***
Lufthansa ***www.lufthansa.com***
Qantas ***www.qantas.com.au***
Ryanair.com ***www.ryanair.com***
United Airlines ***www.ual.com***
Virgin Atlantic Airways ***www.virgin-atlantic.co.uk***

Ferries

Ferry Savers ***www.ferrysavers.co.uk***
P&O ***www.p-and-o.com***
Travel Britain ***www.travelbritain.com/UKPassengerFerries.html***
Travel.World ***www.travel.world.***



Racing Post: top tips on the nose

co.uk/ferries.htm
UK Camp Site ***ukcampsite.co.uk***

Rail travel

Euro Railways ***www.eurorailways.com***
Great Eastern Railway ***www.ger.co.uk***
Great Western Trains ***www.great-western-trains.co.uk***
Railtrack ***www.railtrack.co.uk***
Scotrail ***www.scotrail.co.uk***
UK Public Transport ***www.pti.org.uk***
Virgin Trains ***www.virgintrains.co.uk***

Destination guides

Amsterdam ***www.channels.nl***
Australia ***australia-online.com***
Bargainholidays ***www.bargainholidays.com***
Bugbog ***www.bugbog.co.uk***
Caribbean ***www.caribbean-travel.com***
Caribbean Islands ***www.gopelican.com***
France ***www.franceway.com***
Germany ***www.germany-tourism.de***
Greece ***www.gogreece.com***
Greece ***www.sunisle.co.uk***
India ***www.indiagov.org***
Italy ***www.travel.it***
Ireland ***www.12travel.co.uk***
Ireland ***www.wannabeinireland.com***
Japan ***www.jnto.go.jp***
Scotland ***www.visitscotland.com***
Spain ***www.red2000.com***
UK ***www.exploreukland.co.uk***
US ***www.go-unitedstates.com***

Travel agents

Airtickets ***www.airtickets.co.uk***
Biztravel ***www.biztravel.com***
ebookers ***www.ebookers.com***
Expedia ***www.expedia.co.uk***
First Resort ***www.thefirstresort.com***
Holiday Deals ***www.holidaydeals.com***
Holiday Wizard ***www.holidaywizard.co.uk***
Iglu.com ***www.iglu.com***
Internet Travel ***www.itsnet.co.uk***
Last Minute ***www.lastminute.com***
STA Travel ***www.statravel.co.uk***
ThomasCook.com ***www.thomascook.co.uk***
Thomson ***www.thomson-holidays.com***
Trailfinders ***www.trailfinder.com***
Travel Choice ***www.travelchoice.co.uk***
Usit Campus ***www.usitcampus.co.uk***

<WEBCAMS>

Directories

Allcam ***www.allcam.com***
Camcity ***www.camcity.com***
Digital Camera ***www.dcn.com***
FlyOnTheWall.com ***www.flyonthewall.com***
Webcam Central ***www.camcentral.com***
WebCam World ***www.webcamworld.com***
Webviews ***www.camvista.co.uk***

<WEB CENSORS>

Cybersnoop ***www.pearlsw.com***
Cyber Patrol ***www.cyberpatrol.com***
Net Nanny ***www.netnanny.com***
Xcheck ***www.xcheck.net***

<WEB DIRECTORIES>

About.com ***www.about.com***
4anything ***www.4anything.com***
AOL Netfind ***www.aol.com/netfind***
Excite ***www.excite.com***
Infoseek ***infoseek.go.com***
Liszt (mailing lists) ***www.liszt.com***
LookSmart ***www.looksmart.com***
Open Directory ***www.dmoz.org***
Thomson ***www.thomweb.co.uk***
WebCrawler ***www.webcrawler.com***
Yahoo! ***www.yahoo.com***
Yell ***www.yell.co.uk*** ■

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ADVICE CENTRE

Net help that's one step smarter

@ CHANNELS ://

> TESTED ISP HELPLINES 98
There's nothing more frustrating than wasting time on a £1 per minute call to your ISP – so we've tested every major provider's service to expose the phone failures and reward quality advice

> Q&A 104
All your niggling queries swiftly dealt with by our team of experts

> OUR TOP 50 ISPs 110
The results of our exclusive lab tests of 200 UK providers, ranked and rated

> ISPs AND SOFTWARE 112
The latest on broadband price changes, how to get online with a console and all the latest software news

> TESTED PICTURE POSTS 114
It's never been easier to get your holiday snaps online – we've tested the sites which let you share memories

> CREATE A MAILING LIST 118
Speak to everyone at once by starting your own mailing list – for free!

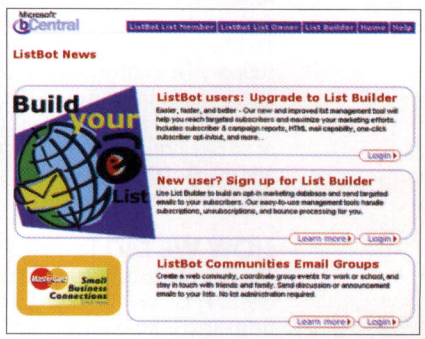
> THE BASICS 120
Essential info on newsgroups, email, the Web and chat

> WEB DESIGN 124
Concluding our series with a look at how to spread the word about your site

HELPLINES
We highlight the ISPs which cut down on phone rage

PICTURES: CORBIS

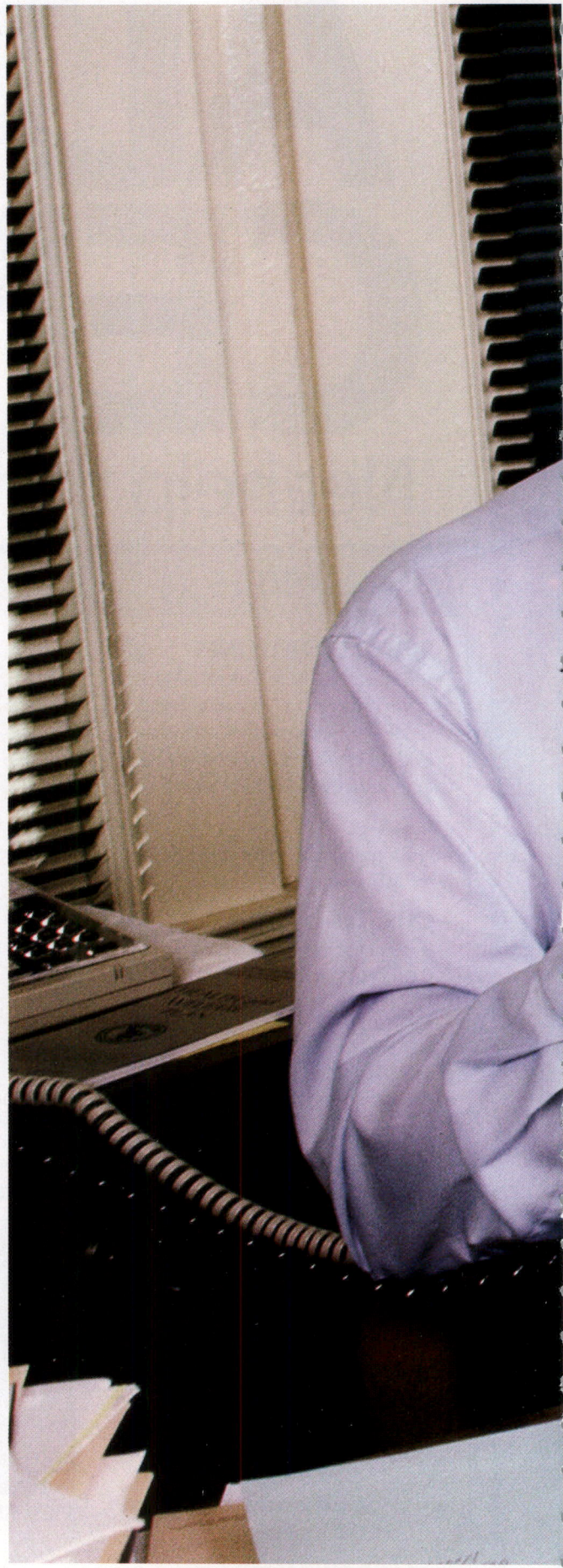
PICTURES Share your snaps online



MAILING LISTS How to get started

Does your ISP do enough to help you?

Ever been enraged by your ISP helpdesk? We tested 20 top ISPs to see how good their phone and email support really is...



ISPS ARE RATHER MYSTERIOUS ORGANISATIONS. You never see them, you don't even buy anything from them most of the time, so what do you do if something goes wrong? If you buy something that's faulty from a shop, you take it back and complain. If a bag of sugar you're buying in Sainsbury's bursts at the checkout, they give you a new one.

But what about ISPs? What if you're not happy with the service you receive? What if, after you've removed that shiny installation disc from your machine, your Internet settings aren't what you expected them to be? Or, six months down the line, you want to change ISP completely? Nobody from the company comes along to remove the product from your machine. Nor does someone else come along to install the new one.

That's why we need ISP helplines and Web-based helpdesks. Their purpose is to listen to your problems and suggest solutions. But how effectiveare they? And if you're with an ISP that charges for telephone support, is it worth it? Your ISP certainly thinks so – all the way to the bank.

So we hatched a plan to test the customer service of 20 ISPs including the cream of the unmetered crop and many of the bigger names such as Freeserve, AOL and BT Internet.

HOW WE DID IT

The idea was to ask two questions, one by phone and one by email. We also looked at the quality of online help each ISP provided; this is an important first port of call for many users with an ISP-related problem.

Our telephone query was simple: 'I've installed your ISP – how do I completely remove the connec-

tion for my old ISP?' When many users install an ISP, they will usually have an old one still left on the machine. Strictly speaking, it's not really the problem of the ISP we're signing up to – we should probably phone the old ISP and ask them how to remove their dial-up connection completely. But we wanted to test the willingness of ISP telephone operators to help customers whatever the circumstances. The calls were made between 9 and 10am on three consecutive weekdays to get a consistent sample.

One of the major areas of consideration was the call charge. Many ISPs have helplines that cost upwards of 50 pence per minute. Some are local-rate and others free, but we wanted to know if the cost of the phone support was reflected in the level of service we received.

This was especially the case with phone queues. Having paid £1 a minute for a phoneline, we weren't expecting to be placed in a queue. We wanted to know which ISPs were the worst offenders for leaving customers stranded in phone queues, and noted how long it took before we were actually connected to a human. Bonus marks were awarded for phone operators that seemed particularly helpful and didn't appear in a rush to finish our call and get on with the next one.

BBC.co.uk: our home page before installation, but would ISPs help us get it back?

Testing our chosen ISPs by email was somewhat simpler. The idea was to send all the ISPs an email with a standard question and then to see how long it took them to respond to it, as well as looking at the quality of the advice given.

The email question was also related to the installation of a new ISP. When you install a new ISP's connection settings, your home page (the first thing you see when you fire up your browser) usually changes to the ISP's own Web page or portal. We asked the ISPs how to go about changing these home page settings back to the page we had before (we said it was the BBC's site at ***www.bbc.co.uk***).

The problem is easily rectifiable, but would the ISPs be willing to mail us back the appropriate remedy? We created an anonymous email account, wrote our emails and awaited replies. It seems that some ISPs don't like email and instead have forms on their Web sites. These we duly completed, posing the same question as in our emails.

WINNERS AND LOSERS

Some ISPs such as Compuserve, Demon and Easynet provide local-rate helplines but many in our test charged 50 or 60 pence per minute. The worst offenders were The Free Internet and Gateway, which pro-

WHAT TO DO IF IT ALL GOES WRONG

HOW TO COMPLAIN TO YOUR ISP»

So you've looked at your ISP's online help and emailed your plea. But you can't find the answer to your problem. So you ring them, but still they can't answer your problem. You've tried all they suggested but nothing works. What can you do? The main thing to note is that you owe them nothing. You're the customer and it's up to them to sort out any problems that may arise.

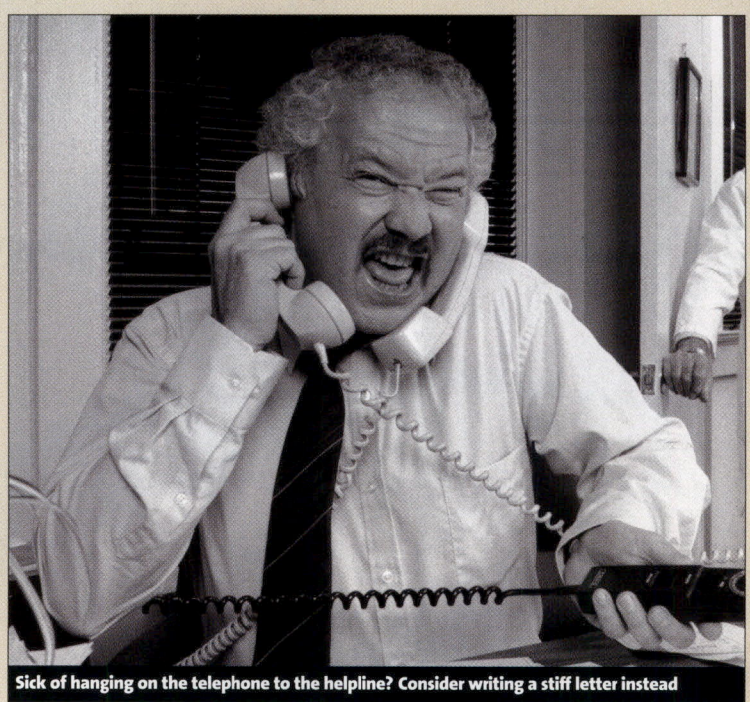
WHAT TO DO NEXT

If the 28 day period has passed and you still haven't got a response, then it's time to take it to the next level. The industry's regulator is Oftel (***www.oftel.gov.uk***). Oftel says the ISP industry 'is a highly competitive market place and the onus is on the consumer to pick the service provider that provides a package that best meets their needs in terms of performance and value for money'. However, the regulator concedes that this may not always solve your problem and you can write to them with major gripes at ***www.oftel.gov.uk/consumer/advice/contact_us***, although this service shouldn't be used lightly. Remember to quote clearly which ISP you're using (including which tariff or service) and you username.

DON'T BE SOFT

Emailing continuously to ISP helplines and email desks probably won't solve your problem as your emails will probably arrive at someone different each time. If they can't solve your problem after a couple of attempts, the first thing to do is to write them a letter. Don't be rude, but do be strong. Send a copy to us, or do anything which you think will make them take notice. Give them a set period – say 28 days – to contact you with the solution to your problem. Make sure you include your username, email address and other contact details with your letter.

Address your letter to someone important like the managing director or, better still, find the name of a specific senior manager from the ISP's own Web site. That way, you'll ensure that your letter of complaint gets looked at by somebody at a senior level.


Sick of hanging on the telephone to the helpline? Consider writing a stiff letter instead

SHARE THE AGONY

If your ISP has given you consistently bad customer service and won't give you the time of day, the chances are you won't be alone in hatred of your careless provider. Post messages to a newsgroup like ***alt.internet.providers*** or ***alt.internet.providers.uk.free*** and ask fellow users whether they've had problems.

And remember, if your ISP continues to give you bad customer service, vote with your mouse and join someone else instead. Better still, seek the advice of your fellow users on a newsgroup or forum before you subscribe to a new ISP. That way, you'll hopefully reduce the chances of you being caught out by another unfriendly ISP.

Keep an eye on our monthly report on the best performing ISPs (see pages 110-111) for the best and worst of the bunch, and see our ISP customer service test results overleaf.

PICTURES: CORBIS

vide helplines at the princely sum of £1 per minute. Indeed, Gateway doesn't seem to have an alternate contact method at all.

We did take into consideration what subscribers would be paying for the service. For example, if you pay a monthly sum for unlimited access, you'd probably expect a free or local rate helpline at the very least – although this isn't always the case. On the other hand, if you access the Internet through a free dial-up ISP and you only pay for the cost of the calls, it isn't that unreasonable of the company to charge. We still think VirginNet is a bit cheeky for charging customers £5.99 a month for local rate support, or £1 per minute if they don't pay the subscription. Predictably, the free numbers seemed to be busier, probably through a combination of high subscriber numbers and users more willing to ring a free number. We were placed in very long queues when we called AOL, Blueyonder and Freeserve, and generally, there seemed to be little or no correlation between the price of a call and the quality of service received.

We had great difficulty in finding many support areas

By far the quickest response for our email tests was under five minutes from an eager and incredibly helpful member of the Easynet support team. Easynet also had one of the most impressive operators we spoke to. He was one of the few to ask us whether we were using a Mac or PC – the representatives of almost every other ISP did not ask this important question. However, it's not a factor we considered too much as some ISPs don't cater for Macs at all. Most helplines don't offer 24-hour access, but many are accessible for at least the daylight hours of each week. We didn't compare ISPs on the hours of the day they provide telephone support, as it's usually fairly comprehensive.

We were impressed when an operator went out of their way to help us. Unfortunately this wasn't always the case – we weren't too impressed with a member of AOL's staff who, when asked to help us uninstall an old ISP, curtly answered 'we aren't licensed to deal with that'.

The first port of call for any problems should always be your ISP's Web site. If you need support regularly, then perhaps it would be wise to use an ISP with a decent online helpdesk – that way, it won't cost you money. Most of the ISPs we looked at do include decent helpdesk areas on their Web sites; this is crucial for keeping the weight off busy phone lines as well as being an example of good customer service. The big names really improved their ratings in this area; Freeserve, Blueyonder and NTL World all have excellent online help areas that are worth a visit by anybody with an ISP-related problem. Smaller organisations lost out by providing worse help areas – designed, a cynic might say, to encourage more people to ring their overpriced helplines. It must be said that most online help and support information on ISP sites is badly signposted. We had great difficulty in finding many support areas, including locating support telephone numbers and email addresses. Many providers need to clean up their act in this area. If they have problems with congested phone lines then perhaps they only have themselves to blame.

TinyOnline, for example, lost out by not having a support area specifically for their ISP – clicking on Support on their Web site simply launches your email program and a new mail message to support@tinyonline.net. And even then, they didn't reply: a story repeated with our emails to AOL, WorldOnline, Compuserve and Breathe. These non-responses cost these providers dear, especially as many of them had bad online support, too.

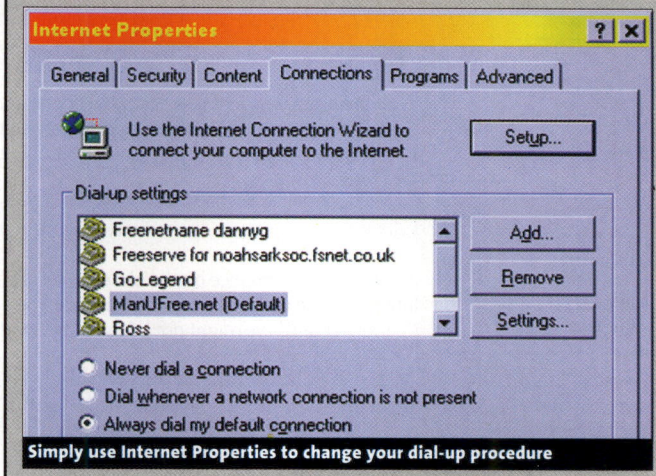
A lot of the lines were premium-rate, so our suggestion is to email your ISP with any problems if you can. If you can't use your own email, perhaps even use a friend's machine or an Internet or work based email account to contact your ISP's helpdesk. If you ring your ISP at the busiest parts of the day this will often mean waiting around in a queue and paying for the privilege. And that's not desirable at all...

THE FINAL RESULTS
So which ISP helplines were helpful and which were simply beyond help? Turn the page to see the final table...

»

HOW DIFFICULT TO SOLVE WERE OUR PROBLEMS?

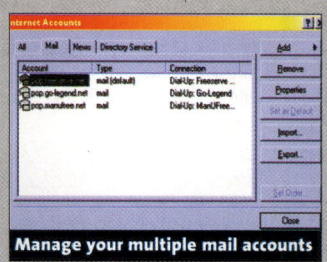
AND THE ANSWERS ARE... »



Simply use Internet Properties to change your dial-up procedure

We asked our ISPs:
'I've installed your ISP. How do I completely remove the connection for my old ISP?'

You don't have to delete an ISP when you install a new one; ISPs can co-habit quite happily, and in fact it's quite a good idea to have a spare in case one fails to dial up when required.

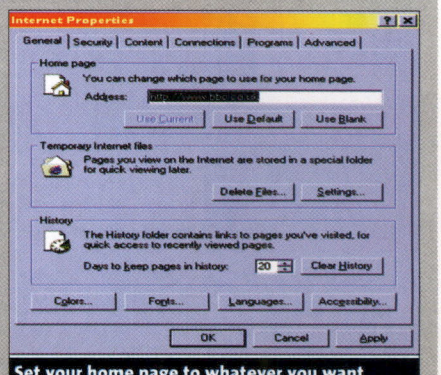

Manage your multiple mail accounts

The easiest way to see and manage your list of ISPs is to double-click on the desktop 'My Computer' icon and then click 'Dial-up Networking'. Here you'll see an icon for each of the Internet connections you have. Simply click on it with the right mouse button and move down and click on delete in the menu. You'll be asked to confirm, and hey presto, your old ISP will be no more. You can also modify your Internet connections through the Control Panel. Click on 'Internet Options' (or 'Internet' on a Mac) and you can modify your connections quite easily.

Removing email settings is a little more difficult, as there are a large variety of email applications. However, it's still not too complex an operation. In Outlook or Outlook Express, click on the Tools menu and go to 'Email accounts' (in Outlook Express it's just 'Accounts'). This will open up a window with the different accounts in. All you have to do is highlight the one you no longer want to use and click the remove button.

We asked our ISPs:
'I've installed your ISP settings and it's changed my home page. Internet Explorer started with the front page of the BBC Web site beforehand.'

In Internet Explorer, go to Preferences in the Tools menu. Click the Default tab, and this will show you where your home page is currently directed. On a Mac go to the Edit menu and click on Preferences and then select 'Home/Search' from the list on the left. You can enter another address or simply click on 'Blank' to make your IE window show a blank page when it starts up. This isn't as barmy an idea as it sounds, especially for dial-up connections from which a home page may take a while to load up, only for you to type in an alternative address anyway.



Set your home page to whatever you want

OUR ISP CUSTOMER SERVICE TEST

HOW THE ISP SUPPORT MEASURES UP»

ISP	URL	TARIFF OF CALL	CALL LENGTH	OVERALL RATING
Easynet	www.easynet.com	Local rate	1 minute 28 seconds	★★★★★

WINNER

We were given excellent service on the phone and it wasn't bad online either. The phone operator was one of the few to ask if we were using a Mac or PC, while a good step-by-step email response giving examples if we were using a Mac or Netscape rather than a PC with Internet Explorer plus reasonable online FAQs rounded off the best performance by far.

LineOne	www.lineone.net	50 pence per minute	3 minutes 53 seconds	★★★★★

A middling performance on the phones was saved by excellent help online and by email. Our operator wasn't particularly helpful or interested and we were on hold for a while. The actual advice was good, but at a price. The email response was excellent and picked up that, for once, we might not be using a PC with IE 5. There's a good searchable help section online as well.

Supanet	www.supanet.com	50 pence per minute	3 minutes 6 seconds	★★★★★

Different phone lines and email addresses for PC and Mac mean you'll always get appropriate advice. A good all-round performance gives Supanet high marks. Our only gripe was with the disinterested phone operator, but the online support is categorised into different sections and is very comprehensive.

Telewest (Blueyonder)	www.blueyonder.co.uk	Free	11 minutes 36 seconds	★★★★★

The helpline might have been free, but it took a big chunk out of our day and we weren't exactly impressed with being placed in a 10-minute queue no matter how little it costs. The online help saved Blueyonder any blushes, as did their superb email response, which also detected that we had not specified which browser we were using.

ClaraNet	www.claranet.com	Local rate	3 minutes 11 seconds	★★★★☆

We got lost in the phone system and were confused by a multitude of recorded messages. We had to ring back in the end, but there are no such problems with the Web site – containing easy-to-navigate pull down menus – or their helpful email support, which arrived within a few hours.

ic24	www.ic24.net	50 pence per minute	5 minutes 46 seconds	★★★★☆

ic24 was reasonably consistent, although the operator's phone manner let the company down somewhat. We were also quite annoyed at paying £1.50 just to be on hold for three minutes – the entire call almost cost a whopping £3. The email support was good: a step-by-step guide arrived within a day. The Web site is a little confusing, but the helpdesk was well ordered.

Madasafish	www.madasafish.com	60 pence per minute	1 minute 32 seconds	★★★★☆

The phone line is pretty expensive, but Madasafish is a good all-rounder. The operator was a little confused at first, but seemed to be quite knowledgeable and helped us out reasonably quickly. The online help isn't convincing, with a lot less content than other sites. We were sent a good step-by-step guide by email, though.

NTL World	www.ntlworld.com	50 pence per minute	4 minutes 36 seconds	★★★★☆

Not a bad performance, but the company was rather saved by its online support – which is second to none and worth a visit whichever ISP you're with. Email response should have been better, and they would have done rather better if they had replied but their phone support was consistent, with the operator sounding friendly and the help useful.

Virgin Net	www.virgin.net	£1 per minute	4 minutes 12 seconds	★★★★☆

It's very cheeky of Virgin Net to offer £5.99 'fast track' help, which means people may end up spending over £70 per year on support. Virgin's general consistency was good but wasn't exceptional in any category, having standard online help and phone advice. The email support was one of the better responses, though.

BT Internet	www.btinternet.com	50 pence per minute	5 minutes 50 seconds	★★★☆☆

Ironically, we weren't very impressed with BT's phone manner, especially as we were in a queue for about five minutes before spending a rather rushed minute or so in the company of the operator. However, the company is infinitely more impressive online (although the site isn't the best for navigation) and efficient with its email advice.

ISP	URL	TARIFF OF CALL	CALL LENGTH	OVERALL RATING
Compuserve	***www.compuserve.co.uk***	Local rate	10 minutes 7 seconds	★★★☆☆

The operator was wary about dealing with another ISP's software but very helpful in the end, helping us out in simple and effective fashion and even thinking to ask whether email accounts needed to be deleted. No response from our email, but Compuserve does have a good FAQs section on its Web site.

Demon	***www.demon.net***	Local rate	1 minute 10 seconds	★★★☆☆

Demon would have been much further up the list were it not for the lack of a reply to our email – we only received an auto response. The operator seemed more than slightly hesistant but was knowledgeable and we were pleased by the level of online support – even if the helpdesk clickthrough is rather difficult to locate.

Freeserve	***www.freeserve.com***	50 pence per minute	8 minutes 16 seconds	★★★☆☆

Freeserve was let down by an expensive seven-minute wait on the phone. The standard of advice wasn't bad, but the operator didn't seem to want to speak to a customer (or, in this case, someone pretending to be one). Their online help is second only to NTL's, but we were sent six pages of FAQs as an auto reply to our email. Hardly a personal response. Very disappointing.

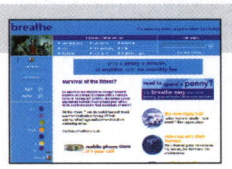
The Free Internet	***www.thefreeinternet.net***	£1 per minute	1 minute 10 seconds	★★★☆☆

It's a shame the expense and mediocrity of the telephone advice let them down. For £1 a minute we expected superb advice, but we were told how to delete our connection in a roundabout way. Their online support pulled them up. Again it was well categorised and easy to navigate.

BigBlueSky	***www.bigbluesky.uk.net***	National rate	2 minutes 5 seconds	★★☆☆☆

We were treated well on the phone and talked through what we had to do. Sadly, BigBlueSky aren't so good online, with very little help, and they also lost out by not responding to our email. A cheap unlimited service BigBlueSky may be but if you get stuck your only option is to phone up. Disappointing.

Breathe	***www.breathe.com***	50 pence per minute	4 minutes 36 seconds	★★☆☆☆



Breathe was mediocre in most categories, and a no-show for our email query didn't help matters. The online help is sparse to say the least, although configuration of your connection is well covered. The telephone advice was a little slow in coming but we were told what we needed to know.

Gateway 2000	***www.ukgateway.net***	£1 per minute	2 minutes 10 seconds	★★☆☆☆

The telephone support was efficient but expensive. Unforunately, the company has little else to offer in the way of help, and if you phone a pound-a-minute helpline regularly then this could work out to be quite expensive. There's a basic FAQs list online but not very much else and there was no sign of email support.

WorldOnline	***www.worldonline.co.uk***	50 pence per minute	2 minutes 25 seconds	★★☆☆☆

A very poor helpdesk online (it was so hidden away we weren't actually sure it was the real help site) and no response to our email meant that an average performance on the phone just wasn't good enough. If it's any consolation, the operator was quite knowledgeable and very friendly.

AOL	***www.aol.co.uk***	Free	6 minutes 33 seconds	★☆☆☆☆

We were given no help on the phone and tacky 'we're all right really' music when we were on hold. Then we were told AOL weren't 'licensed to help' with our query. A very poor performance, especilly since Connie didn't reply to our email, either. The online help is pretty good, though.

Tiny Online	***www.tinyonline.net***	50 pence per minute	3 minutes 16 seconds	★☆☆☆☆

With no response to our email and no online support, this was a rather poor performance by Tiny. The telephone help was quite laboured, although we weren't on hold for too long. The operator didn't seem willing to help with our problem, nor even very friendly.

Q&A

Whether it's a glitch in your software or a problem with your ISP, our team of Net experts has the answer to hand

The sender of the month's Good Question wins a Casio TV1800 Pocket Television, worth £129.99

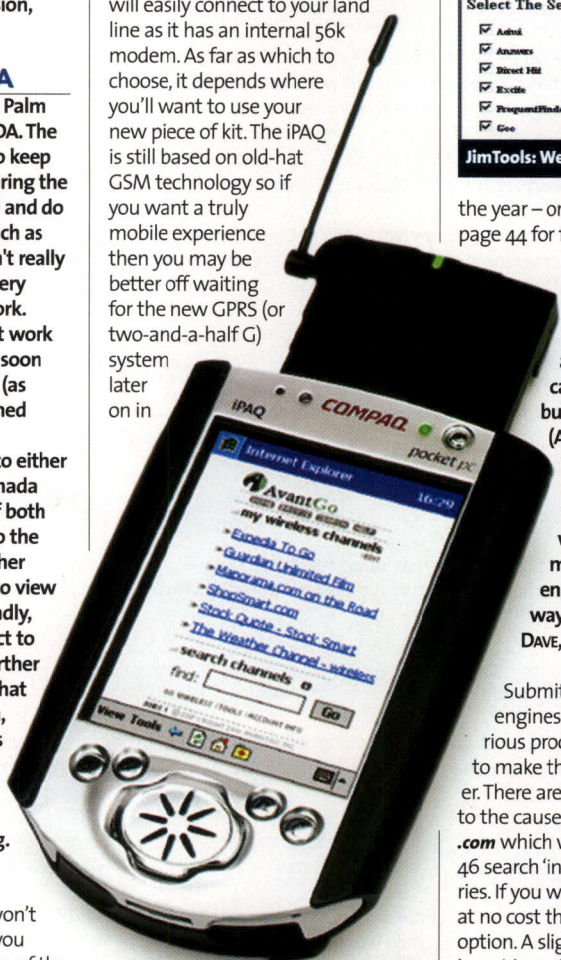
WIRELESS DILEMMA

I want to upgrade my trusty Palm Pilot to a Windows-based PDA. The main reason is that I want to keep track of the stock market during the day (not constantly, though) and do some research using sites such as ft.com and Bloomberg. I don't really need a keyboard because I very rarely type documents at work. I have access to a land line at work but will want to go wireless soon after with either GPRS or 3G (as covered in your perfectly-timed article in the June edition).

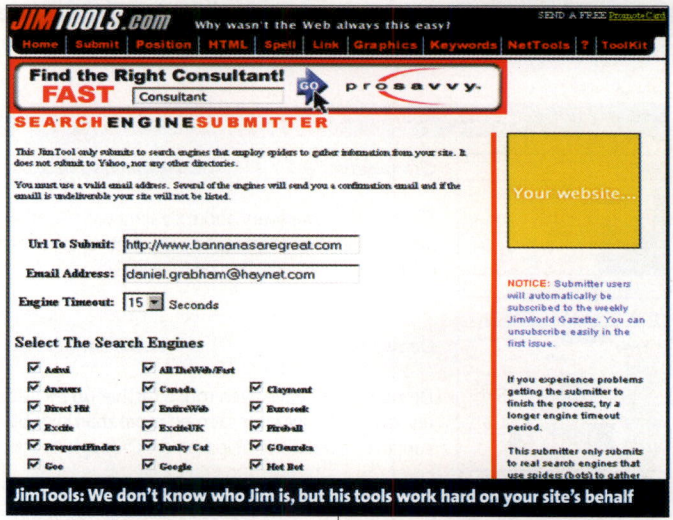
I've narrowed my choice to either the iPAQ 3660 or the HP Jornada 720. Firstly, can you tell me if both these will allow full access to the sites I've mentioned (and other similar ones) and allow me to view my portfolio securely? Secondly, does the Jornada 720 connect to my land line without any further upgrades? Finally, I've read that because of its narrow screen, reading Web pages with lots of text on the iPAQ means lots of scrolling both horizontally and vertically, which can get very annoying.

SANJAY NARDA, VIA EMAIL

There's no reason why you won't be able to get into the sites you mentioned, although because of the shape of the Jornada's screen the site will look more like it would on a conventional computer. The Jornada will easily connect to your land line as it has an internal 56k modem. As far as which to choose, it depends where you'll want to use your new piece of kit. The iPAQ is still based on old-hat GSM technology so if you want a truly mobile experience then you may be better off waiting for the new GPRS (or two-and-a-half G) system later on in the year – or see our Wireless test on page 44 for further inspiration.



The Compaq iPAQ: rather nice


JIMTOOLS.com
Why wasn't the Web always this easy?
Home | Submit | Position | HTML | Spell | Link | Graphics | Keywords | NetTools | ? | ToolKit
Find the Right Consultant!
FAST
Consultant
GO
prosavvy.
SEARCH ENGINE SUBMITTER
This JimTool only submits to search engines that employ spiders to gather information from your site. It does not submit to Yahoo, nor any other directories.
You must use a valid email address. Several of the engines will send you a confirmation email and if the email is undeliverable your site will not be listed.
Your website...
Url To Submit: http://www.bannanasaregreat.com
Email Address: daniel.grabham@haynet.com
Engine Timeout: 15 Seconds
Select The Search Engines
Askmi
AllTheWeb/Fast
Answers
Canada
Claymont
Direct Hit
EntireWeb
Euroseek
Excite
ExciteUK
Fireball
FrequentFinders
Funky Cat
GOcurda
Goo
Google
Hot Bot
NOTICE: Submitter users will automatically be subscribed to the weekly JimWorld Gazette. You can unsubscribe easily in the first issue.
If you experience problems getting the submitter to finish the process, try a longer engine timeout period.
This submitter only submits to real search engines that use spiders (bots) to gather

JimTools: We don't know who Jim is, but his tools work hard on your site's behalf

SEARCHING QUERIES

I was finding things to add to my site when I came across your tips on building a great Web site (April issue). It had everything I would ever need to make my site even better, so I thought I would try and submit my site to a search engine. What's the best way to go about this?

DAVE, VIA EMAIL

Submitting your site to search engines can be a long and laborious process, but there are ways to make the whole task a lot easier. There are several sites dedicated to the cause, including ***www.jimtools.com*** which will submit your site to 46 search 'indices' and 144 directories. If you want it done quickly and at no cost this is probably the best option. A slightly better method is to invest in a piece of software to do it for you. In addition to the capability of a site like JimTools, using submission software such as Dynamic Submission 2000 (***www.submission2000.com***) or EZSubmit (***www.stepone.co.uk/products/ezsubmit***) allows you to make sure your site's HTML files have keywords and phrases in the correct places to ensure search engines will be able to categorise your pages correctly. These keywords and phrases are contained in so-called 'Meta tags' in the top of your HTML document. Submission software will optimise these and make sure you get the right results.

AD AN IDEA

I have developed a Web Site that is now attracting around 1500 visitors a day. It's mostly a fun site (my intention was never to make a profit from it) but a friend of mine suggested that I might be able to cover my costs by letting a company or organisation advertise on it. Is that possible? If so, where would I start? I honestly would not have a clue where to find these people and tell them about my site. Are there any sites which could help?

LINDA CHRISP, VIA EMAIL

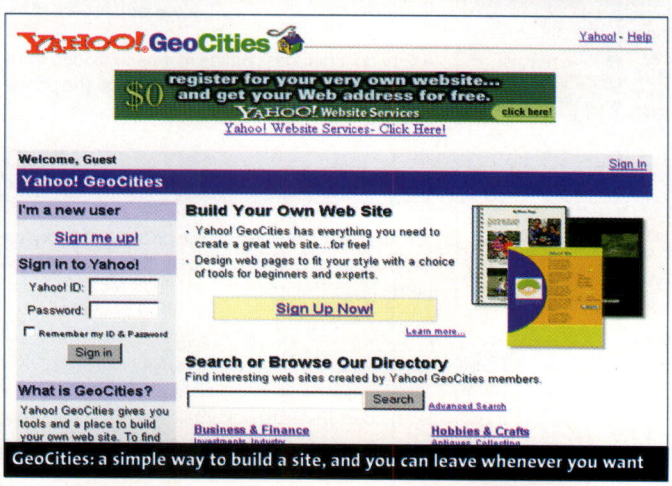
Q&A GOOD QUESTION

DOMAIN BLUES

My friend and I have just started making a Web site through GeoCities (*www.geocities.com*). We're quite far through making it now, but the problem is the URL is a lengthy Geocities address. We've now decided that we'd like a proper domain name ending in .com, .net or .co.uk instead of the longer address but for as little money as possible. Is there a way of taking our site away from Geocities to get our own domain name?

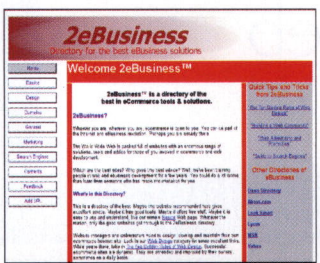
DOMINIC GRACE, VIA EMAIL

You don't have to take your site away from GeoCities. Firms like 123 Reg (***www.123-reg.co.uk***) and UK2.net (***uk2.net***) offer cheap domains which you can redirect to your Geocities address. If you want your site to be hosted away from GeoCities then it will cost you more money, as you are buying space on a company's server; try ***www.easy space.com*** or ***www.supa names.co.uk***. You can easily take your site from GeoCities; if you created the site on your own computer, just upload the files to your new host. If you created the site using GeoCities' Quick Build feature, you have to copy the source code from the GeoCities files over to new HTML files.


YAHOO! GeoCities
Yahoo! - Help
$0 register for your very own website... and get your Web address for free.
YAHOO! Website Services
click here!
Yahoo! Website Services- Click Here!
Welcome, Guest
Sign In
Yahoo! GeoCities
I'm a new user
Sign me up!
Sign in to Yahoo!
Yahoo! ID:
Password:
Remember my ID & Password
Sign in
What is GeoCities?
Yahoo! GeoCities gives you tools and a place to build your own web site. To find
Build Your Own Web Site
Yahoo! GeoCities has everything you need to create a great web site...for free!
Design web pages to fit your style with a choice of tools for beginners and experts.
Sign Up Now!
Learn more...
Search or Browse Our Directory
Find interesting web sites created by Yahoo! GeoCities members.
Search
Advanced Search
Business & Finance
Hobbies & Crafts

GeoCities: a simple way to build a site, and you can leave whenever you want

The easiest way to get advertising onto your site is through those ubiquitous banner ads. However, they're usually designed not to make a profit, but simply to gain more traffic for your site. Banner ads are the rectangular adverts seen at the top of many pages and can be as simple or as complicated as you like, but they should be small in file size or they annoy people by taking forever to load. The best way to sell advertising on your site is through an agency – see ***www.doubleclick.com*** or ***www.zebusiness.co.uk*** for more details on how to do this. If you simply want more traffic, a banner exchange program is the answer. This works by exchanging ads – every time your site is displayed it



2ebusiness: sell your site online

would show somebody else's ad, while your banner would be shown on somebody else's site. You must make sure that the banner ads you are provided with are appropriate for the content of your site. You could approach individual sites with a similar level of visitors to your own and exchange that way.

OFFLINE PLEASURES

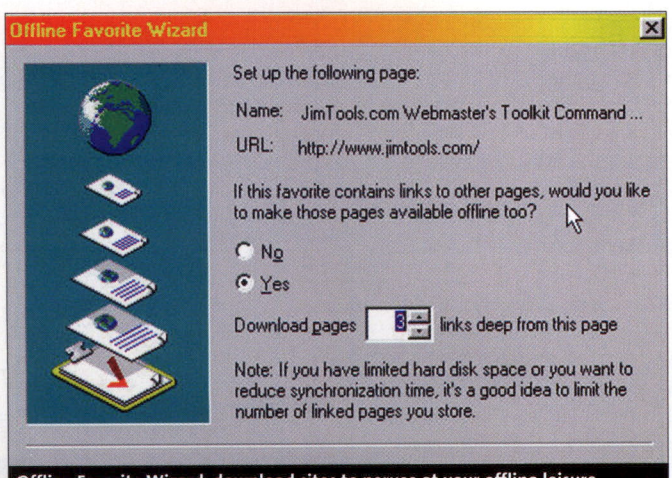
I have read that Internet Explorer will let you save a Web site onto your hard disk and then look at it whenever you want, whether you're connected to the Internet or not. Is this true, and if it is, how does the Web site update itself if you're offline?

JAMES PULFORD, VIA EMAIL

IE does indeed let you do that, and it's very handy. When you're online and want to save a page to view offline, click on 'Add Favorites' in the Favorites menu. Click on the 'Make available offline' box and, hey presto, clicking on OK will make that page appear when you're not connected. Using that method will only save the page you are visiting and clicking on any of that page's links will mean you'll have to go online to retrieve them. What you might want to do is save a whole portion of the site for offline use. To do this, click on 'Customize' in the 'Add Favorites' box instead of clicking OK. This will take you to Offline Favorite Wizard, on which you can select how many layers of the site (how many links deep) you want to save.

You can also tell Internet Explorer to retrieve a new version of the site every time you're online, or even schedule updates. To use Internet Explorer when you're offline, click 'Work offline' in your connection box, or select 'Work offline' from the file menu. Be careful if you're in the habit of downloading a lot of sites as complex sites can take an age to download and take up acres of space on your hard disc. Make sure you use a System Utility like Disk Cleanup (in your Start menu) to get rid of the Net files every so often.

On a Mac, the site will download to a folder of your choice – go to the Internet Control Panel and click on 'Web'. Check which folder the 'Download files to' command is pointing to, and you'll be able to keep tabs on how much space it's using up. There are also various software applications to help you download portions of Web sites such as WebStripper, which you can download from ***www.zdnet.com***. Such software is more powerful than Internet Explorer's offline browser, especially if you want to filter the files you download, for example by file size or type.


Offline Favorite Wizard
Set up the following page:
Name: JimTools.com Webmaster's Toolkit Command ...
URL: http://www.jimtools.com/
If this favorite contains links to other pages, would you like to make those pages available offline too?
No
Yes
Download pages 3 links deep from this page
Note: If you have limited hard disk space or you want to reduce synchronization time, it's a good idea to limit the number of linked pages you store.
Offline Favorite Wizard: download sites to peruse at your offline leisure

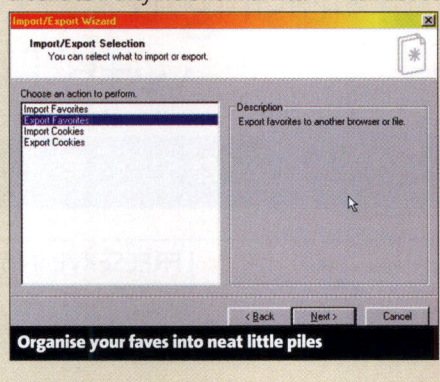
QUICK QUESTION TIME. FINGERS ON THE BUZZERS...

FAQs

>I am using Internet Explorer 5 and want to sort out my favourites list, which is becoming unmanageable. Is there any way I can make the process a bit easier than the usual 'Organise Favorites' command, as it takes ages?

JEFF SMITH, VIA EMAIL

Apart from the usual method, there is a way to make the process easier on a PC. In Windows Explorer, go to Windows>Favorites on your hard disk. This folder stores all your favourites and you can create folders, delete them or shuffle them around as if they were normal files.



Organise your faves into neat little piles

Making favourites easier to handle is something Microsoft is working on for its forthcoming Windows XP operating system. On a Mac, your favourites are stored rather like Netscape stores Bookmarks, in a single HTML file. Look on your hard disk in System Folder>Preferences> Explorer. The file is called favorites.html and can be edited as if it was a normal HTML file.

>Can you tell me how I can print out my list of Favourites?

TAG, VIA EMAIL

It's easy on a Mac, as the Favourites are all stored in a single file, meaning that printing them is a doddle. On a PC you'll have to create your own similar file by clicking on File>Import/Export. Then click 'Next' and select 'Export Favorites'. Select the path and file name you require and your favourites will be saved to an HTML file which can then be edited or printed at your leisure. As the links on the page are clickable, this file could also form the basis for a 'My Favourites' page on your own Web site. Another ingenious alternative is to use separate software to organise and print your favourites, such as ShowURL. See ***www.faico.net/showurl*** for more details and downloads.

>I'm confused by all the search engines available on the Internet. Can you give me some advice on which ones to use?

JOHN JAMES, VIA EMAIL

Yahoo! (***uk.yahoo.com***) is one of the best categorised search engines – it stores the details of Web sites in categories, so if you want to search for, say, the sites of national newspapers, you can click on the category 'News and Media' and then 'Newspapers' to find a list of the sites, as opposed to typing 'The Guardian' into the search box. You can also search for purely UK-based sites, too. Google (***www.google.com***) is generally the most powerful engine, as it indexes sites using its own PageRank system. It too has a UK variant at ***www.google.co.uk***.

>Can you recommend some virus scanning software which I can download from the Web? I don't mind paying for a good one.

PETER NILAND, VIA EMAIL

With anti-virus software, it's probably best to go for a recognised brand name, as these companies often provide ongoing updates for the software which you can normally download for free. Popular packages include Symantec Norton Antivirus (***www.symantec.com***). Select your country and then you can browse, buy software, or download updates all in your local currency. The site will also allow you to register your product if you bought it elsewhere. Another popular brand is McAfee (***www.mcafee.com***). Again,

McAfee: vaccination against viruses

select your country and you can buy online and download the software from the site. However, spendthrifts may like to make sure they compare the site prices with those at indpendent retailers such as Software Paradise (***www.softwareparadise.co.uk***) or Jungle (***www.jungle.com***).

INTERNET TOOLS & TIPS

powered by freeserve
www.freeserve.com

Making the most of the Web with Freeserve

AUGUST 2001 | SMARTGROUPS 106 | FREESERVE INBOX 108 | ONLINE HELP 108 | INSTALLING FREESERVE 109

Communications www.freeserve.com/smartgroups

One pair of hands

If you manage a club or another kind of group, do you sometimes wish you had another pair of hands? There's no need if you have a Smartgroup

Anyone who has ever had to manage a large group of people will know how much work it can create. Whether you're the secretary of a sports club or you're organising a one-off family reunion, there'll be information to give out, news to announce, opinions to be gathered and messages to pass on. Using only the telephone, 'snail mail', meetings and even email can make your tasks numerous and time consuming.

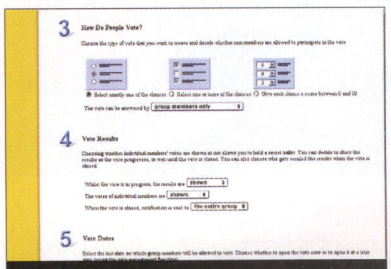
The solution comes in the form of a Smartgroup. Smartgroups.com, which can be found at *www.freeserve.com/smartgroups*, is a Web-based service offering a wide range of tools in one place, making group communication quick and easy. It's completely free, which means that at well as saving time, you'll save money otherwise spent on phone calls, postage stamps and travel.

A Smartgroup is like an information-based, interactive Web site. Each one provides a homepage showing key details about what your Smartgroup is for, as well as facilities such as a message board, a calendar, 20mb of space for text or image files, a voting area and a simple database for facts such as contact details. All that's required to set up a Smartgroup is the creator's name, email address and a chosen password, plus a name and description for your Smartgroup. In fact, it's so easy to set up a Smartgroup it takes under a minute to do.

The first thing you'll probably want to do when you've set up your Smartgroup is invite people to join it. Enter the email addresses of anyone you think might be interested in joining and your Smartgroup will email them either a default invitation or your own edited or original version. Once they've received the email, which contains the address of your Smartgroup, your potential members can consider your proposal and decide whether to join. It's that simple.

A Smartgroup is ideal if, for example, you're responsible for organising a football league; perhaps you've been asked to manage your office league and have to co-ordinate players from all over your building. You can use the voting facility to

Find all the help you could need



Choose how you want voting to work

find out which match dates are convenient for everyone, then post the fixtures on the calendar. Enter everyone's contact numbers and the area they live in the Shared Information area and between them they can arrange to share car journeys home.

If you're the Best Man organising a stag night for a groom, set up a Smartgroup so you can put your ideas for the event to the vote among the groom's friends. Avoid any arguments by making everyone's votes secret so that only the final plan is revealed. As arrangements for the event progress, you can report them in Smartgroup-based emails which your friends can choose to receive at their normal email address or via their own Smartgroup address. And if you're likely to have very frequent updates, your friends can make them more manageable by choosing to receive a single daily digest of all the messages at once. Then, when you've recovered from the event itself, you can all access Share Files where you can upload digital photos of what everyone got up to!

The Smartgroup's creator isn't the only person who can manage it. This role can be shared with, or handed over to, someone else. You can also specify which members are allowed to post group email messages, set up calendar events or votes and access shared files. That means some areas can be kept private from certain members if they need to be.

Gathering comments and votes from your group members can all be done from home with a Smartgroup

There's also the option for certain members to act as moderators, so that only approved messages can be sent out to everyone.

Your Smartgroup doesn't have to be open only to people you know. If you'd like to make contact with strangers who share your hobby or interest, you might like to specify that your Smartgroup be made public rather than private. Other Internet users can then search Smartgroups by category until they find a listing for your Smartgroup, which they can then choose to join if they wish.

Invite like-minded strangers to join your Smartgroup by making it public

A Smartgroup is an invaluable service for anyone who's part of a group that needs to communicate. For more information on how one can work for you, visit *www.freeserve.com/smartgroups*.

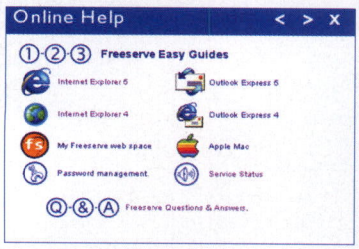
PICTURE: PA

ONLINE HELP

YOUR PROBLEMS SOLVED

FREESERVE ONLINE HELP

If you've got a problem with the Internet or have a question about it, you can get a straight answer, straight away, from Freeserve online Help (www.freeserve.com/help). Read the following summaries of our four main Help sections to find the one that suits your type of query. Then connect to Freeserve and choose Help to have your problem solved.

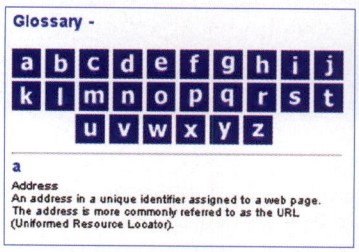


THE GLOSSARY

If there's an Internet expression you don't understand, you'll find it here in plain English.

THE EASY GUIDES

If there's an area of your Internet use that's causing you difficulty, turn to our Easy Guides for a solution.


Glossary -
a b c d e f g h i j
k l m n o p q r s t
u v w x y z
a
Address
An address in a unique identifier assigned to a web page. The address is more commonly referred to as the URL (Uniformed Resource Locator).

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

If you've a specific question, go to our Q&A section. Select the general area from our drop-down menu to find a specific question and our answer.

CONTACT

If you still need help, you can email our technical help desk, open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They'll be happy to help. Direct email addresses are listed on the contacts page, or you can call the following:

PC USERS 0906 2517517
MAC USERS 0906 7234000

Calls cost 50p per minute.

Online help
www.freeserve.com/help

Freeserve Inbox www.freeserve.com/communications/inbox

Keeping it

Don't work up a sweat dashing between voice mails, faxes and

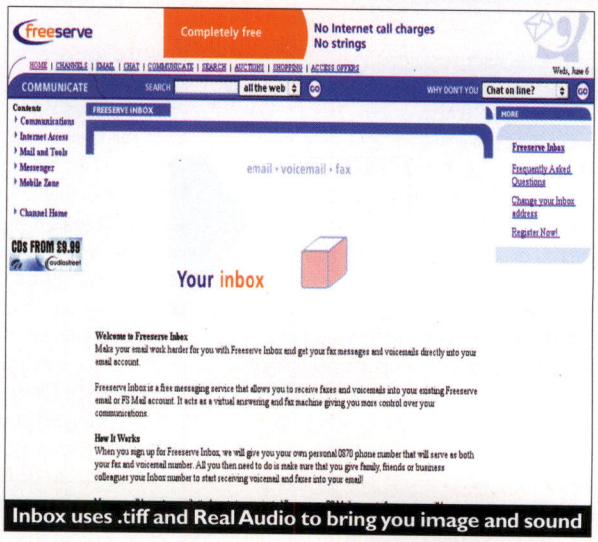
For most of us, life in the 21st century is hectic. At work, we're dashing between meetings, the phone and the coffee jug; out with friends, we're rushing to meet up on time while making calls on the mobile to find out where everyone is.

We're lucky, then, that friends, family and colleagues have a choice of ways in which to leave messages for us if we're not around to speak to them when they call. The most obvious way for them to do this is to leave a voice mail, whether that's on an answering machine or your mobile network's answering service. Colleagues and clients might prefer to send a fax. And then, of course, there's email, a quick and informal way of writing a note that won't get lost under a pile of paperwork and which can be responded to in minutes.

The problem is, if you're too busy to talk on the phone, you're probably going to find it hard to find the time to check so many different sorts of message! You'll need to call your mobile network for voice mails there, play back your messages on your answer machine, pick up faxes from the fax machine and switch on your computer to retrieve your emails.

To make life easier, Freeserve have come up with an ingenious free service which allows your voice messages and faxes to be stored in your Freeserve email account along with your emails. As an email user, you'll probably be familiar with sound and image files sent as attachments to emails alongside their text content. Freeserve Inbox uses the same technology to save voice mails and faxes, which it does using Real Audio and .tiff formats respectively. And because all these messages come to the same place, there's only one number to give out to friends, family and colleagues, whether they want to leave a voice mail or send a fax or email, making less work for you and for them. You'll be emailed this number, which has an 0870 prefix and is charged at the national rate, when you sign up for Inbox at *www.freeserve.com/communications/inbox*.

Because Inbox receives your voice mails and faxes on your computer, there's no need to spend money or find space for answering and fax machines. It also means

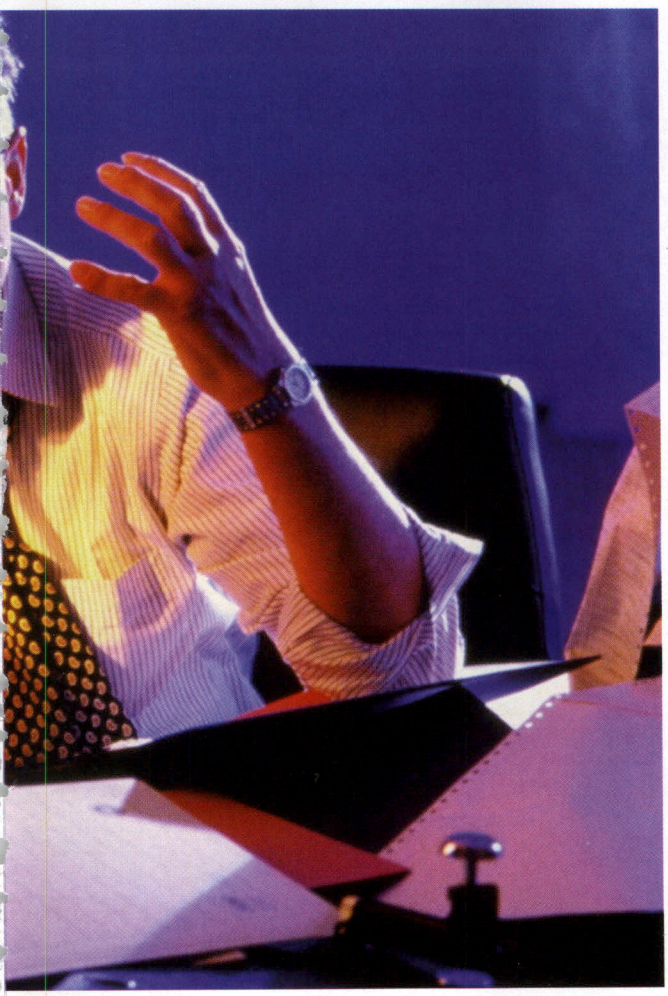


Inbox uses .tiff and Real Audio to bring you image and sound

powered by freeserve www.freeserve.com

simple

emails: receive them all in one place



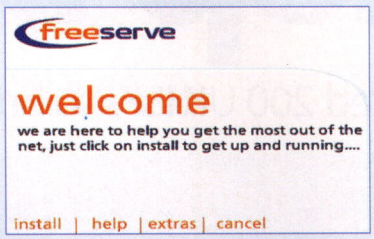
With Inbox you need only your computer to keep up with all your messages

that all your messages are kept private from prying ears and eyes; only you can access them, using your Freeserve mail password. And in the same way that your email account can receive emails even when your computer is switched off, so it can receive faxes and voice mails without disturbing you. You can access your Freeserve mail anywhere you can get onto the Internet, so you'll be able to hear your voice messages, read your faxes and retrieve your emails wherever you are in the world.

Inbox is designed to make life easier for you, and that starts with making it easy to sign up to. Take a few minutes to save yourself hours of time by going to *www.freeserve.communications/inbox*.

GETTING YOUR PC ONLINE

OUR STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO INSTALLING FREESERVE


freeserve
welcome
we are here to help you get the most out of the net, just click on install to get up and running....
install | help | extras | cancel

1 Insert your Freeserve CD and wait for it to autorun. If it doesn't, go to the start menu and select 'Run', then type D:/setup.exe and click 'OK'.

2 Next, choose 'Install'. The helpful connection wizard will automatically guide you through the right steps to get connected. Click on 'Install Internet Explorer' to continue. If you already have Internet Explorer on your PC, it will now be updated.

3 A licence agreement pops up. Read through it and click 'I Accept' followed by the 'Next' button at the bottom of the box.

4 After selecting the destination folder for Internet Explorer (the installer will automatically create a new folder for it in the Programs folder), you get a choice of how much to install. There's a recommended 'typical' set of components, or you can pick and choose your own – if, say, your hard drive is a bit full. The wizard then takes over and begins the installation process. Sit back and wait to be prompted before moving on to the next step.

5 The wizard will quite possibly optimise your system to get the best possible performance out of it. Let it do so – it knows what it's doing.

6 In just a minute or two, a message appears informing you that installation is complete. Click on the 'OK' button to move on to the next step.

7 Wait for the wizard to automatically configure your PC to run the new version of Internet Explorer. After a few moments, you'll be prompted to restart your PC. Click the 'Finish' button and wait for your PC to automatically restart. If the CD does not autorun, double click on the CD drive icon in Windows to continue.

8 When your computer gets going again, it will update its settings for IE5 and Internet Tools. This is perfectly normal.

9 You're now ready to sign up to your Freeserve account. Make sure your modem is switched on and click 'Continue'. Your modem will then dial into the Freeserve registration computer.

10 You'll be prompted by a security alert confirming your connection. Click 'OK'.

11 A welcome screen provides two options. New members should click on the 'Create New Account' option.

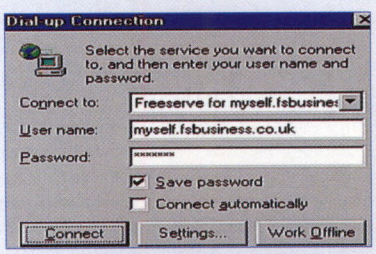
12 Take a couple of minutes to read the terms and conditions, and click 'Accept'. Enter your personal details so your account can be set up. Click 'Continue'.

13 The Help screen explains how your Freeserve email address is constructed. Choose your email address and password and click on 'Continue'.

14 Congratulations. You are now a member of Freeserve. Click on the 'Finished' button when you're ready.

15 When you launch Internet Explorer, it automatically contacts the Freeserve number and sends your username and password to the Freeserve computer (unless you uncheck 'Save password'). This is all you need to log on to the Internet.

16 Once connected, Internet Explorer takes you straight to the Freeserve site. You can now start to explore the Internet for just the cost of a local phone call.



Pick up your Freeserve CD from any Dixons, Currys, PC World or The Link store, or have it sent to you direct by calling 0800 976 8890. It's free.

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PICTURE: CORBIS

Our top 50 ISPs

August 2001 We tested 200 UK ISPs to bring you the best performers

ISP NAME	WEB ADDRESS	DESCRIPTION	PHONE	EMAIL ADDRESSES
Dabsol	www.dabsol.net	Free ISP with online sign-up help and comprehensive features	Sign up online	Unlimited
Gateway 2000	www.ukgateway.net	Offers subscription-free Internet access in the UK and ROI	Sign up Online	5
Sniff Out	www.sniffout.net	Free provider with a range of content and technical support	01883 742510	Unlimited
F9 Free	www.f9.net.uk	Surftime, ADSL, and free dialup accounts for the home user	0800 0737800	Unlimited
The X-Stream Network	www.x-stream.com	Uses on-screen advertising to offer 0800 and voice/fax	0870 7306466	1 Unified
Free Online	www.free-online.net	Straightforward free ISP offering news and email	0870 7060504	5
Go Free	www.gofree.co.uk	Free ISP offering online sign-up, complete with helpline	Sign up online	Unlimited
Powergen	www.pgen.net	ISP from Powergen, the energy supply company	Sign up online	5
Breathe	www.breathe.co.uk	Recently went into external administration, but still trading	0800 500150	5
Freenet	www.freenet.co.uk	Free access with a gaming bias. Includes online auto sign-up	08700 722622	Unlimited
Free Internet	www.free-internet.co.uk	Free access, free mail and Web space	Sign up online	1
Virgin Net	www.virgin.net	Long-standing ISP now offering a stylish free access service	0500 558800	5
Smartone	www.smartone.co.uk	Content-based service offering free dial-ups and incentives	08700 774411	1 Unified
Tiny Online	www.tinyonline.net	Features a beginner's guide to the Net and useful added extras	0900 290 9103	5
Freeserve	www.freeserve.net	Said to have invented the free ISP model. Surftime available	0990 500049	Unlimited
Callnet	www.callnetuk.com	Innovative free ISP offering enhanced Web-based services	0171 3358300	5
Freewire	www.freewire.net	Free ISP without any sign-up – dial into 0845 088 0088	Sign up online	Unlimited
OrbitalNet	www.orbital.net	Cheap ISP with a range of account options	0800 3891397	5
UK Online Ltd	www.ukonline.co.uk	Family-based ISP with unlimited email	01749 333333	1
Eidosnet	www.eidosnet.co.uk	From the publishers of *Tomb Raider* and *Championship Manager*	Sign up online	Unlimited
Wireplay Internet	www.wireplay.com	Gameplay-owned online games network with fast servers	0845 757 7577	0
This is it!	www.thisisit.co.uk	End-user targetted free ISP	0906 9124000	Unlimited
UK Fantastic	www.ukfantastic.net	Spirited free ISP offering good online technical help	0870 740 7777	Unlimited
MONTHLY SUBSCRIPTION Flat-fee packages and specialist ISPs; ideal for peak-time surfing				
Luna Internet	www.luna.co.uk	Small ISP offering virtual servers and Internet access	01782 855 655	1
Paradise Internet	www.pins.co.uk	A subscription provider which also authors software	01256 414863	1
Internet in Nottingham Ltd	www.innotts.co.uk	Local Midlands provider with a long track record	0115 956 2222	1
AOL	www.aol.co.uk	A large ISP offering value-added services for the home user	0800 3765432	5
Aviators Network	www.aviators.net	An ISP designed with aircraft-related content	0700 2842867	1
Timewarp Internet	www.timewarp.co.uk	ADSL, dial-up and Web site consultancy	0161 950 8855	1
Compuserve	www.compuserve.com	Long-standing ISP who offer proprietry software	0990 000200	5
Which? Online	www.which.net	Free ISP from the consumer magazine of the same name	0645 830240	1
ClaraNET Ltd	www.clara.net	Subscription-based ISP with a range of account options	0800 3582828	Unlimited
Demon Internet	www.demon.co.uk	The UK's original dial-up account	0800 4589666	Unlimited
BUSINESS ISPs Service providers for small businesses				
Firstnet Services Ltd	www.firstnet.co.uk	Wide bandwidth ISP/ASP solutions large and small	0113 294 4224	Unlimited
London Web Comms	www.londonweb.net	Business targetted ISP offering a full range of Net services	0208 3494500	3
Knowall	www.knowall.net	Large business ISP attempting to service every need of the SME	0207 6101115	Unlimited
AdeptWeb Ltd	www.adept.co.uk	Full ISP service range and an ASP service for business accounts	01843 850444	Unlimited
CYBERphile Internet	www.cyberphile.co.uk	Specialists in leased lines, LANs, firewalls and ISDN connections	01543 454840	1
UUNet	www.uk.uu.net	Wide range of business solutions and Pipex Dial	08702 424220	12
Netscalibur	www.netscalibur.co.uk	Promising pan-European provider taking the place of Dircon	0800 0720000	Unlimited
Nildram	www.nildram.net	Subscription-based ISP with a Low User option	0800 0720460	Unlimited
NewNet Limited	www.newnet.co.uk	Some of the UK's busiest sites with five years' experience	0845 355 44 55	1
UKIP	www.ukip.co.uk	Business-oriented ISP with a full range of services	01772 908000	1
FDD Ltd	www.fdd.co.uk	Offers a range of IP integration services	01865 321003	1
Charis Internet Services	www.charis.co.uk	Strong customer support for online businesses	0121 248 5800	1
CIX	www.cix.co.uk	Specialises in conferencing and voiceover IP solutions for business	0845 3555050	Unlimited
Easynet Ltd	www.easynet.net	Subscription based dial up service	0171 6814444	Unlimited
UVNET	www.uv.net	Free ISP with a strong technical focus	01753 776699	1
GTS Netcom	www.gtsgroup.com	Tailored business solutions with a focus on customer service	01344 395500	20
Datanet International Ltd.	www.data.net.uk	Business network and interactive site design specialist	01252 810081	Unlimited

KEY **EMAIL ADDRESSES** *The number of free email addresses your ISP will provide.* **CONTENT** *Outlines whether the service provider provides exclusive content.* **MAC SUPPORT** *Not all service providers offer software and tech support for Apple Macs.* **MODEM SUPPORT** *Check your hardware to see whether your ISP can get the best out of your modem.*

Reliability, speed of connection and value for money are the criteria we weigh up to identify the best ISPs and award ratings.

Variation in modem speed
Measures whether you get a constant speed once connected. Each ISP starts with 100 percent and loses points with speed variance.

Variation in time to connect
The reading is taken from the stage between clicking 'Connect' and physical connection.

Availability
Measures how many times an ISP refuses to connect, through the engaged tone or failure to respond correctly to modem signals.

Our ISP testing is carried out by NetBasics, an independent company specialising in providing ISP information for consumers and businesses. NetBasics makes every possible effort to ensure that the data presented to you here each month is correct.

NetBasics and the publishers of *the net* cannot be held liable for any damages caused by the publication of this data. Any ISP that wishes to be included in the evaluation programme, or wishes to amend or verify details in our tables, should email ***eval@netbasics.com***.

For more information on NetBasics, visit its Web site at ***www.netbasics.com***.

CONTENT	MAC SUPPORT	MODEM SUPPORT	SET-UP FEE (£)	MONTHLY CHARGE (£)	PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES	PHONE SUPPORT HOURS	VERDICT: RELIABILITY AND SPEED
None	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★★
Yahoo Portal Site	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★★
None	No	V.90, K56Flex	None	None	National rate	24/7	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	National	7am-11pm, 7 days	★★★★☆
Chat, news, lifestyle, shopping	No	K56flex	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex	None	None	Premium Rate	24/7	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
Entertainment, sport, shopping, finance	Yes	V.90, K56Flex	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
Games links and support info	Yes	K56Flex, V.90	None	None	National	24/7	★★★★☆
Newsgroups and IE5 download	No	V.90	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★☆
A range of Virgin channels	Yes	X2	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
Original portal site with general links	Yes	V.90	None	None	Metered	9am-6pm M-Sat, 10-5 Sun	★★★★☆
Search engine, Hotmail, channels	No	V.90	None	None	Local	24/7	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★★☆
Chat servers, channels, services	Yes	K56Flex	None	None	Free	24/7	★★★☆☆
None	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V90	None	None	Local	9am-10pm	★★★☆☆
Comprehensive portal content	Yes	V90	None	None	25p per min	24/7	★★★☆☆
Free access to the Mplayer games network	No	V.90	None	None	50p per minute	24/7	★★★☆☆
Games news, chat, add-ons	No	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	50p per minute	12noon-12m't, 7 days	★★☆☆☆
None	No	K56Flex	None	None	£1 per minute/via email	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	Metered	9am-11pm	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	12.50	Local	8am-9pm	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V.90, X2	None	8.00	National	11am-7pm, M-F	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V90	None	10.00	Local	24/7	★★★★☆
Plenty of content within the AOL software	Yes	V.90	None	9.99	Free	8-10.30 M-F, 9-9.30 Sa	★★★★☆
Listings for flight planning and navigation	No	K56Flex	None	11.75	Standard	9am-9pm, 7 days	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V90	None	10.00	Metered	9am-7pm, 7 days	★★★★☆
Large range of channels and search engine.	No	V.90	None	7.50	National	8-12midnight, 7 days	★★☆☆☆
Online shopping with consumer protection	Yes	K56Flex	None	7.75	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	K56Flex, X2	None	8.99	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	11.75	Local	24/7	★★☆☆☆
Search engines and support.	Yes	V90	10.00	10.00	Local	24/7	★★★★★
None	Yes	K56Flex	15.00	12.50	Standard	9am-9pm M-Sat	★★★★★
UK business search and domain registration	No	V.90, K56Flex, X2	None	None	Metered	24/7	★★★★★
None	Yes	V.90, K56Flex	None	100 p/a	Local	8.30am-6pm	★★★★☆
None	Yes	33.6	None	11.74	Standard	8.30am-6pm M-F	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90, K56Flex	Apply	Apply	Call	9am-8pm M-F, 10-6 Sat	★★★★☆
None	Yes	K56Flex, X2	None	11.49	Local	9am-9pm, 7days	★★★★☆
None	No	V.90, K56Flex	None	11.75	Local	8am-9pm, 7 days	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V90	None	10.00	Local	9am-10pm	★★★★☆
None	Yes	V90	None	125 p/a	National	8am-6pm	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V90	None	22 p/a	Free	9am-5.30pm	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V90	None	10.00	Free	8am-7pm	★★★☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	14.99	Local	8am-10pm M-F, 11a-6p S-S	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	K56Flex	None	11.99	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V90	None	None	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	No	V90	None	14.95	Free	24/7	★★☆☆☆
None	Yes	V.90	None	5.87	National	24/7	★★☆☆☆

SET-UP FEE *Some ISPs charge a fee to open an account.* **MONTHLY CHARGE** *If you don't go with a free ISP, then you'll pay a set monthly fee.* **PHONE SUPPORT CHARGES** *Tech support's great – as long as you're not having to pay a fortune for it.* **PHONE SUPPORT HOURS** *When the tech support desk will be open to take your calls.*

Broadband give and take

Access gets cheaper or more expensive – depending on which ISP you use

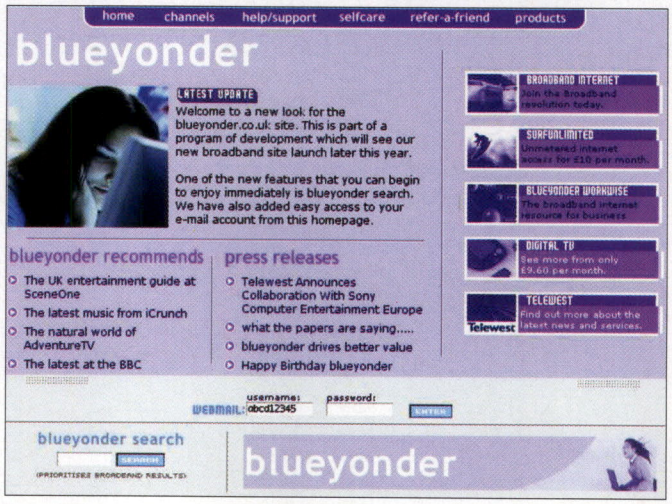
As the broadband war hots up, companies are chopping and changing their prices on an almost daily basis – leaving customers more confused than ever.

Telewest has cut the cost of its Blueyonder (***www.blueyonder.co.uk***) broadband service by £8 per month. However, Freeserve (***www.freeserve.com***) has announced a 25 percent increase in the cost of its ADSL package from £39.99 to £49.99 per month, blaming BT and Oftel.

On the other hand, Telewest customers now have access to a cable modem service for a fixed monthly fee of £25 (provided they subscribe to one or more of Telewest's other telephone or digital TV services). Blueyonder is available to over four million homes and over 21,000 users have signed up.

BT Openworld is reported to be thinking about joining Freeserve in a price hike – even though it's already more expensive than Blueyonder. The company has admitted it is shifting its focus from the home to business user.

AOL has recently announced a hike in the monthly broadband fees it charges in the US. AOL already charges a premium for its service, and it's unlikely that it will see a downturn in customer numbers over in the US. After all, the company has 29 million US subscribers, three quarters of who are connected to an unlimited access plan. Each will have to pay around £1.30 extra per month on top of their £16 charge. Although the company maintains prices will not be affected in the UK – AOL UK is an 'autonomous business' – it shows that even the biggest names in America are not willing to make broadband a cheap commodity.



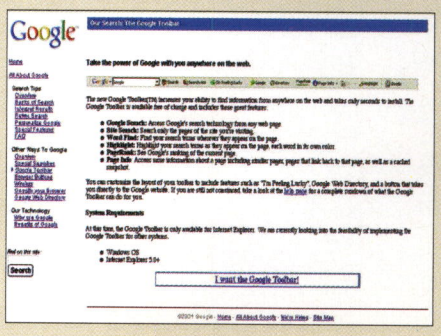
What would Jesus do? Surf for charity...

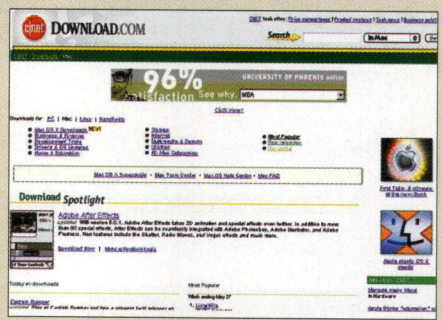
Christian Aid has launched a charitable dial-up ISP called Fish (***www.fish.co.uk***). Subscription is free and calls are charged at local rate, but by using the Fish ISP you can help the charity raise money at your own leisure – a percentage of the profit made from the calls is donated to the charity. For instance, 10 hours of surfing will earn the charity enough money to plant an acre of carrots in Uganda. Christian Aid also runs the portal site, which has various features for subscribers including a fair trade shopping guide. Serious issues are covered, with a feature on children's health as well as Christian information. Currently, only PC users can download the connection software, but Mac users can register and configure their connection themselves.

NET-FRIENDLY PACKAGES AND DOWNLOADS

THE MONTH'S TOP SOFTWARE »

If you use a search engine on a regular basis, the chances are you'll have heard of Google. For frequent Googlers, typing in ***www.google.com*** to your browser can seem pretty tedious after a while, which is why the company has developed the Google toolbar. Downloadable from ***www.google.com/options/toolbar.html***, the toolbar will sit at the top of your Internet Explorer window. You can simply type what you're looking for into the search box on the bar. Unfortunately, the toolbar is only available for Windows and Internet Explorer currently, but it is fully customisable, with several tools. With the highlight tool, Google will highlight your search terms on any page and the toolbar will allow you to search within a page or even an entire site. You can access more information about the page including a list of pages that link to that page. Best of all is Google's unique 'I'm Feeling Lucky' feature. Type in a search term and then click the button and you'll be taken to the first site in the list straight away.

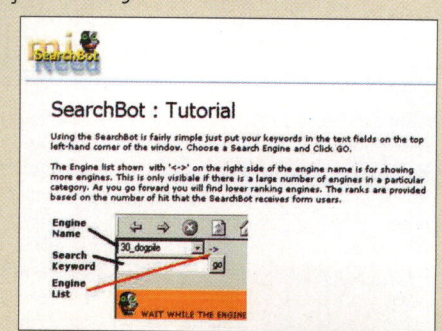




If you run a Web site, you can also help your users search the Web better by adding one of Google's search boxes to your site. There are plenty to choose from, ranging from simple cut-and-paste to boxes that will ask your users in which country they'd like to search and in what language. For more details, take a look at ***www.google.com/services/index.html***.

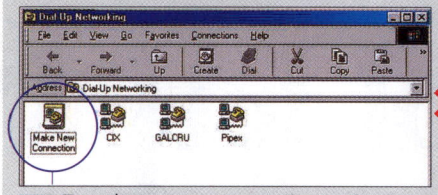
Another powerful way to find what you want is to use some standalone software to search the Web. One of the best sites to download software from is CNET's ***www.download.com***. Many applications are shareware or demo versions, but you can easily find free variants to download. One such example is SearchBot, available from ***www.davecentral.com/16756.html***, which will submit your search terms to over 80 sites.

If you're forever losing files on your computer, why not build a search engine for that, too? There are several packages that will do this, including My Search Engine, which you can also download from CNET. The application builds a profile of your entire machine, even searching for text inside files. It then allows you to search this by keyword and displays the search as a summary with information such as the files' last-modified date and size. As this is shareware, the software you download is unfortunately only a free trial, but the full version is hardly a wallet-buster at just under £13.

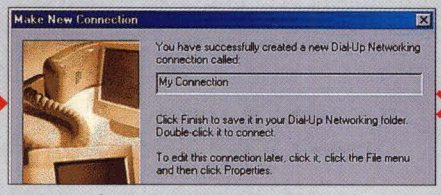


WHY BE AT THE MERCY OF ONE CONNECTION?

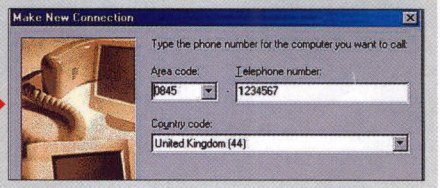
HOW TO SWITCH ISPS IN SECONDS»



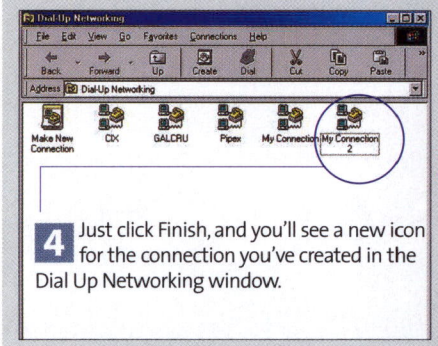
1 To make your new connection, go Start > Programs > Accessories > Communications > Dial Up Networking. Then just click the 'make new connection' icon.


Make New Connection
You have successfully created a new Dial-Up Networking connection called:
My Connection
Click Finish to save it in your Dial-Up Networking folder. Double-click it to connect.
To edit this connection later, click it, click the File menu and then click Properties.

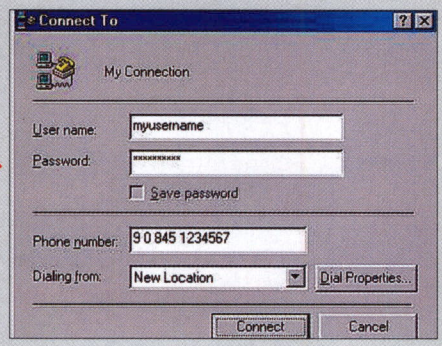
2 Start by typing in your intended ISP's name (your PC should automatically choose your modem), then click Next.



3 Now type in the new ISP's telephone number (you'll get this just by calling them and asking) and make sure you choose the correct country to show where you're dialling from.



4 Just click Finish, and you'll see a new icon for the connection you've created in the Dial Up Networking window.



■ TOP TIPS

Copy the new connections onto your desktop. That way, when one ISP won't connect, you can simply switch to another one in seconds, rather than having to navigate back to the Dial Up Networking window.

5 Double-click the new icon to access the window into which you should input the username and password supplied by the new ISP. Hit 'connect', and dialling should begin...

PS2 and AOL take on Xbox

Xbox: it's a box, but in the shape of an X

Sony has signed a deal with AOL enabling owners of PlayStation 2 consoles to access AOL's Web, chat and email services. AOL will gain from the deal because of the extension of its user base into the 18-34-year old PlayStation market; software developers for the PS2 will be able to incorporate AOL chat and email into their new games by the end of 2002. The idea is that through the deal, Sony will be able to cultivate a community of PS2 gamers using its Instant Messaging and chat facilities. Sony hopes the alliance will give the PS2 an advantage over the looming Microsoft-driven Xbox, which is expected to come with a hefty 8Gb hard drive and high speed Internet connection as standard. Sony doesn't want to stop there, though, as it hopes to take the PS2 into multi-player broadband gaming territory. The company intends to launch a new version of the console which will let users plug in a hard drive and broadband link (users will obviously also have to invest in a mouse and keyboard). Sony has already signed a deal with UK cable operator-cum-broadband ISP Telewest to roll out a broadband service for its consoles. There are also suggestions that a Netscape browser will be developed for use on the system. Who knows: with Sony's backing, this is one browser war Netscape might win...

Net Basics
The Internet in Focus
ISP Directory

Blow through the mist surrounding Internet Service Provision with desktop software designed by NetBasics, the leading ISP industry research organisation.

The ISP Directory features over 100 key facts and pricing information for nearly 200 UK ISPs including every industry leader.

For further info, visit:
www.netbasics.com

Net Basics™
NetBasics, The Internet in Focus
info@netbasics.com
Telephone 0113 246 0009 in the UK

ON TEST PIC STORAGE

Put your snaps

Putting your photos in a virtual album is a cheap and handy way to share snaps with friends around the

THE BEST THING ABOUT OWNING A digital camera is the ability to take a picture, download it onto your machine and then shoot it across the Web within minutes. And all without having to spend a fortune to get them developed first. In fact, sales of digital cameras are beginning to outstrip those of their film-based counterparts. It's the future.

But emailing pictures to your friends is one thing; what if you want to put them on the Web without the hassle of creating your own site? The answer is simple: put them in an online photo album. Sites are cropping up all over the Web for you to upload your pictures to an online album for all to see. Just email your friends the URL and you've sent them e-postcards with a difference.

Before you upload your photos to a site there are several things you'll need to think about. Firstly, what format are you going to use to save your files? For photos the best format to use is Jpeg (.jpg) files. Gif (.gif) is the other format that's ideal for the Web, but for pictures it's best to stick to Jpegs – in fact many of the online photo sites we looked at would only accept Jpegs. (Gifs are generally used for 'flatter' Web pictures like logos, banners and graphic text.) Your digital camera (or scanner) software will allow you to export the picture as a Jpeg.

Sites all over the Web let you upload your pictures for all to see

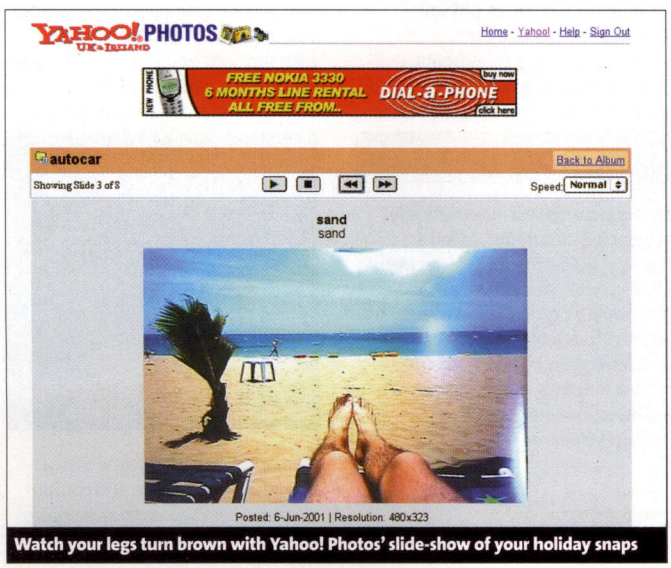
SIZE MATTERS

As you'll be putting your pictures onto the Web for your friends and relatives to download and view, you'll need to make sure they're a reasonable size. When we refer to 'size' in this context, we mean the size of the picture files as well as the their physical size. Check the physical size of your pictures, which can be easily adjusted in any photo editing package (usually under the 'Edit' menu). Most album sites have guidelines on the size of pictures they will accept, but the size of the file is often even more important.

online

globe – but just how easy is it to go digital?

YAHOO! PHOTOS
UK & IRELAND
Home - Yahoo! - Help - Sign Out
3 for £10 on bestselling paperbacks
amazon.co.uk SHOP HERE
Hello, bovaboy_uk! This album is Private [Edit]
My Briefcase
autocar
Go to Album
Tips and Help
Photo Albums > autocar
Order prints
As the owner of this album you can select a photo, click 'Order Prints' and they'll be mailed directly to you.
Add Photo - Create Album - Rearrange Photos
Showing 1 - 8 of 8
View: Thumbnail | List | Slideshow
Order Prints
Email
Move
Copy
Delete
Check All - Clear All
Click on thumbnail to view larger version
Email Photos to your friends
Select as many photos as you want and click the "Email" button above. More info
map for alan
me
sand
me---!
Camera Shopping
Check out the great deals on cameras in Yahoo! Shopping!
Photo Resources
Yahoo! Clubs
Photography, Digital Cameras.
Yahoo! GeoCities
Build your own photo
drink
5
3
photo (2)
A typical Yahoo! Photos album – 30Mb of photo space to use however you choose



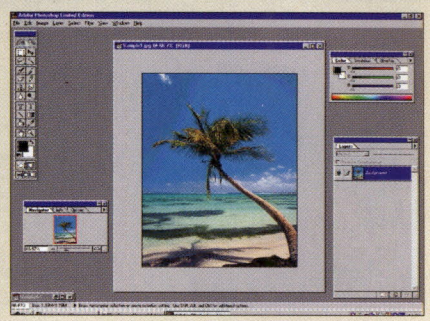
Watch your legs turn brown with Yahoo! Photos' slide-show of your holiday snaps

If you're abroad when you put your photos online, it's likely you'll be uploading your pictures from a cyber café. Remember that the connection there will almost certainly be better than that of your relatives' 56k modem in Scunthorpe, so make sure the file size of your pictures is small enough. After all, you don't want them to have to wait an hour to download three fairly uninteresting pictures of you on the beach.

The best way to reduce file size is to use one of the free utilities available to do the job for you. One of the best is Spinwave, available to use online at ***www.spinwave.com***. The site's 'cruncher' will compress both Gif and Jpeg formats. Helpfully, the site creates several new versions of the picture for you to save and use at your leisure. »

WE RATE THE BEST PHOTO-EDITING SOFTWARE

PHOTOSHOP 6
★★★★☆ £440



Adobe's Photoshop (***www.adobe.com***) is one of the few applications able to call itself an industry standard. The simple interface hides a wealth of features and although novices may feel out of depth, the more basic features are reasonably simple. The only problem is a lack of Web-specific features, but then it's more for professionals than for someone wanting to put family snaps on the Internet.

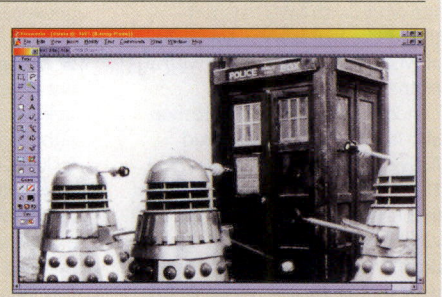
MICROSOFT PHOTO EDITOR
★★★☆☆ Free

Microsoft's Photo Editor is included with many versions of Office and is an oft-forgotten gem. OK, so if you're looking to take red-eye off a picture, then this isn't what you'll need, but if you want to crop your family portraits, make a background transparent, or change the format your picture is saved in, then MS's simple package will probably be one of the most useful bits and pieces you'll ever discover lurking in the Start menu of your machine.

PAINT SHOP PRO 7
★★★★☆ £78

Paint Shop Pro (***www.jasc.com***) has over 20 million users. The programme has a variety of automatic photo-retouch features plus some useful Web tools. It's a lot easier to use for beginners and includes tools to optimise photos specifically for Web use. Animation Shop even allows you to animate images. If you're looking for powerful photo-retouching features but without the cost of Photoshop, download an evaluation copy of Paint Shop Pro from the site.

MACROMEDIA FIREWORKS 4
★★★★★ £215



Currently being peddled along with Dreamweaver as part of the Studio package, there is no better solution for Web graphics than Fireworks (***www.macromedia.com***). It might be a bit complex for adjusting photos, but it will still export well for the Web. And it's easy too – there's one of those handy wizards to help you do it. You can even specify the file size you'd like to compress to. If you're thinking of creating a Web site as well as fiddling around with photos, you'll find nothing better.

bootsphoto.com
Share, store and have fun with your photos online!
Boots
HOME
MY PHOTOS
PUBLIC GALLERY
TIPS
HELP
With bootsphoto.com you can...
• View your photos securely online
• Share your photos with friends and family
• Order top quality prints or enlargements online
• Keep up to date with the latest hints and tips on photography
How it works
Develop your film at Boots, and ask for a copy of your photos to be uploaded onto bootsphoto.com OR transfer digital photos onto the site from your own computer. Click here to see a list of participating Boots stores.
bootsphoto.com uses Fujifilm technology and paper to help ensure the best possible quality.
SAVE!
Save between 10% and 20% on your prints and enlargements
WIN!
Win a menu gourmand for two with overnight stay
TO USE MEMBER SERVICES SIGN IN!
Member name
Password
Go
Forgotten your password?
Whether it's photos of your wedding, the children growing up, the party last Saturday, or the holiday of a lifetime – if you've captured it on film, you'll want to share the memory on bootsphoto.com
NOT A MEMBER?
Please join before collecting your photos
Join now
Guided tour
What can I buy?
Collect photos
About us | Terms and conditions | Contact us | Glossary
© 2000 bootsphoto.com Ltd

BootsPhoto.com: ask the people at Boots nicely and they'll put your developed photos online for you – and at no extra cost

Picture compression works by removing unnecessary colours. For example, Spinwave will 'reduce' a 256-colour picture to 128 colours simply by combining colour shades that are close together. This unfortunately means that some of the resulting compressed pictures won't look too good, but will be very small. The trick is to find the compromise between size and quality: pick the smallest decent-looking pic you think you can get away with.

Spinwave sells offline software versions of its Gif and Jpeg crunchers, but search ***www.download.com*** for other applications available from sites like ***www.webopt.com*** and ***www.fcodersoft.com***.

Once the photos are compressed, they're ready to go online. One of the most popular photo album sites is the MSN.com Photo Centre at ***communities.msn.co.uk/photoalbums***. Unlike many of the photo sites on these pages, this one is UK-based. And yes, it's owned by Microsoft, but at least that means that the site and your photos won't disappear overnight. The MSN photo album site works with MSN Passport – the service that lets you sign in to all MSN sites. You can log in with a Hotmail address, too.

Adobe, the maker of Photoshop, also has a very good site called ActiveShare (***www.activeshare.com***). The site includes some excellent tips for budding photographers, but what's even better is that you can download Adobe's ActiveShare software for free. (It's also available free from ***www.cnet.com***.) A superb freebie, it includes everything you'll need to edit and manage photos for the Web and will even interface directly with your digital camera so you can crop and edit your images before saving them onto your PC. The main 'album' display also allows you to caption your photos.

Until recently, Brits needed a scanner and lots of patience to upload pics

UNDER DEVELOPMENT

Unfortunately, many photo album Web sites are American. This means any processing or extra services offered is often off-limits for Brits. Sites such as ActiveShare and Yahoo! Photos (***photos.yahoo.com***) say they will let you get your photos developed and put online immediately, but this often only applies to US punters. Until recently, Brits couldn't put traditionally-developed photos online unless they had a scanner and lots of patience. Now, though, several big-name British developers have developed an online presence, meaning your pictures can be developed and copies put on the Net at the same time.

One of the biggest is Boots (***www.bootsphoto.com***). When you take a film into your local Boots store for processing, simply ask for a free (for the time being, anyway) copy of the film to be put on the site. When collecting your printed pictures from the shop, you'll be given an ID which allows you to log in to the site. Before viewing them online you will need to register.

There is one negative (no pun intended): you can't save the photos from the Boots site – the site won't allow it. However, with a half-decent colour printer you can always print out the Web page to give away. Alternatively you can always do a screen grab and paste the graphic into a photo-editing package. You can then save it as you wish.

Ordering reprints and enlargements is an easy process: select what you want and the size of the print you require. You can also buy t-shirts, tablemats and even jigsaws based on a photo of your choice. Boots also has a 'public gallery' on show, along with pictures from *The Times* newspaper library. As with many online photo libraries, you can add images to your Boots portfolio from your own computer. Boots' site provides plenty of tips and advice on how to avoid common problems. There's even a directory of professional photographers you can hire.

Kodak has launched a similar site, PhotoNet (***photonet.kodak.co.uk***). Again, the idea is that you can order reprints and other photo-based gifts easily, but it makes for a decent home for your photos regardless.

If you are going away and taking your digital camera, remember to take the right equipment with you. Many cybercafés will probably be able to download your photos, but it's a good idea to take the instruction manual, software and computer cables with you as they probably won't have them. And don't forget the charger either.

Apart from ensuring your camera actually works, the hardest part of getting your photos online is making them easy to download. Most sites will help you through any problems with this process and some will even do it for you. It will pay dividends when you email your friends and family with your new online album. They'll all be able see what a wonderful time you're having...

Kodak PhotoNet: offers gifts too

HOW TO GET SNAPS ONLINE IN THREE EASY STEPS

■ We're going to use PhotoFun (*www.photofun.com*) to set up our account. Once you've signed in, you can go straight to the 'Upload photos' section. If you want to take things a little steadier, there are tutorials on how to use a digital camera or a scanner to get your photos online.

■ We'll go straight to our album so we can upload some photos right away. The site includes some stock photos in your album by default, so you can experiment without harming any of your own files. We want to upload some shiny new pictures, though. Simply browse for each picture and then click 'Upload photos'.

■ The pictures will automatically appear in your album, called a 'Gallery' at PhotoFun. You can even choose what you gallery will look like. You'll be given a direct Web address to email to your friends and family. For instance, go and have a butchers at this gallery: *members.photofun.com/danielgrabham/dannyg*

PhotoFun: just three steps to upload your snaps

WHERE CAN I PUT MY PHOTOS ONLINE?

HOW THE MAIN SITES MEASURE UP»

STORE NAME	TUTORIAL?	URL	ORDER GIFTS?	OVERALL RATING
Yahoo! Photos	No	photos.yahoo.com	No	★★★★★

As you'd expect from the world's best portal, the Yahoo! photos site co-ordinates with all the rest of your email, chat and other My Yahoo! features. The site gives you a whopping 30Mb of space to store your pictures, and Yahoo! are in the process of upgrading the site so albums can be created within albums. A thumbnail version of the picture is automatically created on uploading.

MSN Picture It Photo Centre	Yes	communities.msn.co.uk/photoalbums	Yes	★★★★★

MSN's stab at storing photos online is one of the best available, and if you've already got a Hotmail account, or MSN Passport, you can use it straight away without having to register again.

ActiveShare	Yes	www.activeshare.com	No	★★★★☆

ActiveShare is Adobe's take on Web-based photos. And the purveyor of top quality photo-editing software Photoshop doesn't disappoint. The site is very American, but you can sign up to put your photos online wherever you are and there's a complete guide to digital imaging to boot. Best of all, you can download the excellent Adobe ActiveShare application for free.

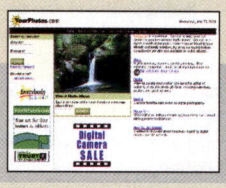
PhotoPoint	Yes	www.photopoint.com	No	★★★★☆

As with other sites, you can keep your photos secret or share them with the world, depending on what you want to do. The site also has photo-editing tools which are a Godsend for those without a proper photo-editing package. PhotoPoint will even take your still pictures and make them into minute-long movies to show your family and friends.

PhotoFun	Yes	www.photofun.com	Yes	★★★★☆

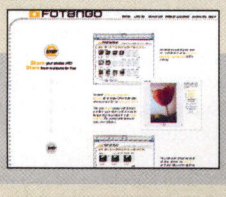
PhotoFun takes the online photos idea a stage further, allowing you to create e-cards, slide shows and even a screensaver with sound from your pictures. We're sure your friends and family will love having you scrolling across their desktop...

YourPhotos.com	Yes	www.yourphotos.com	Yes	★★★★☆



This site has a nice 'getting started' area and a guide to getting the best results from your photography. Like many of the sites, public albums also have guestbooks so people can comment on your masterpieces The albums themselves are simple but this means the site is quite fast, and all in all, there are far worse places to stick your pics.

Fotango	No	www.fotango.com	Yes	★★★★☆



Fotango is one of the most flexible albums on the Net. The site lets you select individual images you want to make public, and even lets you choose who can see them. From your 'roll' of photos you can create albums and then add titles and captions to the pictures. A pretty good place to put your pictures, especially if you only want to show a few of them off to the outside world.

Zing	No	www.zing.com	Yes	★★★★☆

Zing has recently upgraded its site and has improved navigation as well as making the entire site more pleasing to the eye. The best change is that the site has introduced a child-friendly ratings system for all the albums on the site. Only 'G' rated albums are placed in the public directories – 'PG' rated albums are not available for public view, although you can invite people to view them.

Photoworks	No	www.photoworks.com	Yes	★★★☆☆

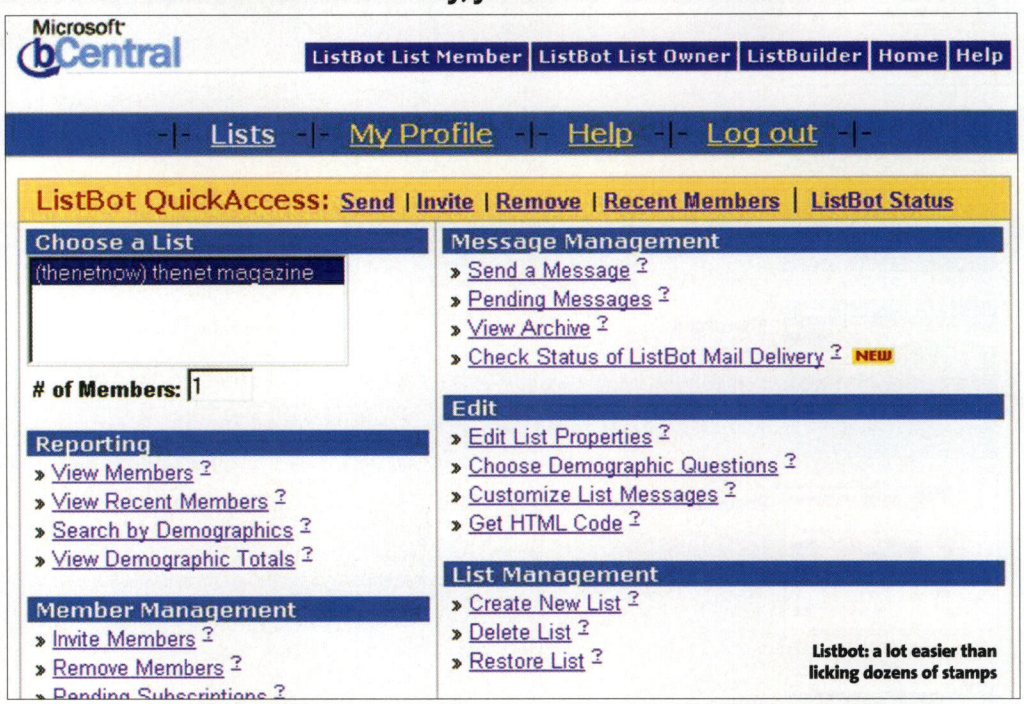
Photoworks is another US site which promises a lot more than it can actually deliver outside of the Americas. Still, it's a good site for dropping off your photos, and it powers some of Yahoo!'s site, so it's not bad if pure and simple storage of photos with no frills is all you're after.

Create your own mailing list

Got some friends? Want to mail them all? There is another way, you know... read on to find out how

IF YOU RUN A CLUB, ARE IN A BAND or are interested in any given sport, you might well have thought about creating a mailing list.

The concept has been prolific on the Net for some time; just as the people who send junk mail have a list, so do the spammers of the world. At the very least, you'll probably already be on a list of some description, even if it's just from your ISP. But this isn't about spam, it's about how you can communicate with a whole group of people easily via email. So, if you've thought about creating an email list for something you do, we'll show you how. And it won't cost you a penny.



Listbot: a lot easier than licking dozens of stamps

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU'RE TALKING TO?

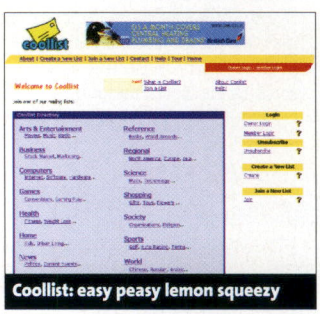
Before we look at specific sites, you need to think about who you're going to communicate with. In the case of *the net*, we want to communicate with our readers, so it seems natural that we'd want to create our own mailing list as an example.

There are many sites on the Internet that enable you to set up a mailing list, but you really need to make sure you're going to use a reliable provider. After all, you don't want to set up a list only to see the site it's hosted on close in six months' time. Portal sites are often the best bet; for instance, Yahoo! took over eGroups, previously one of the leading mailing list services on the Web. However, we chose ListBot (***www.listbot.com***) as it's flexible and has all the things you need to create a good mailing list.

WHAT TYPE OF LIST?

ListBot allows you to create several types of lists. The site calls a conventional mailing list an announcement list. This is what we've decided to create for *the net*'s readers. That means only we can send messages to the list. And we will, honest.

One of the other types of list is a discussion list. All signed-up members can send a message to the list which is then sent to all the list's members. An even easier-to-use site which offers a very similar service is ***www.coollist.com***.



Coollist: easy peasy lemon squeezy

ListBot also offers a moderated version of the discussion list, whereby the list owner is sent submitted emails to accept or delete before they are posted to the whole list. This might be a good idea if you are setting up a discussion list that is open to the general public but you still want to retain overall control. Discussion lists are very useful if you want to have dialogue with all the members of your list – for example, clubs might want to discuss when to hold a meeting or get-together.

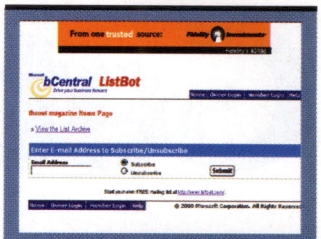
It's all relatively simple, but the sites provide detailed help if you get stuck

YOUR NAMES ARE ON THE LIST, COME ON IN

Once you've got your list, make sure you tell everybody how to subscribe, whether by email, at a meeting or on a notice board. If it's a discussion list, kick off with a simple welcome message. If it's a simple mailing list you could set a date for the first mailing or, if you're really keen, start mail-outs straight away.

It's a good idea to send out mails at regular intervals. If you decide on a twice-weekly mailout, send it on specific days of the week – Tuesday and Friday, for example – and stick to that; you'd only confuse your subscribers by sending out three one week and two the next. Something urgent to say? There's nothing stopping you from sending it out, but mark it as a 'newsflash' or give it a different subject so you clearly identify it as something out of the ordinary. If you're going on holiday or it's Christmas, tell your subscribers you won't be sending a newsletter next time. Don't leave them in the lurch, but equally don't feel guilty for not sending one – it's not as if the subscribers are paying you, they're getting it for free.

It's a good idea to try to mark all your newsletters out as being from the same sender – although it is hard to create an identity within the confines of plain text. Symbols are a good idea, as is a heading which always stays the same (like the way in which the logo of a magazine or newspaper is always in the same



Read all about it on *the net*'s very own mailing list

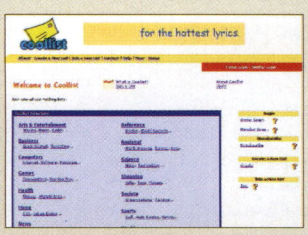
Want to hear about new sites, special offers and the latest snippets from the Web? Then join *the net*'s new mailing list, which we'll be launching this month. You'll receive a regular email with site reviews and the latest amusing bits and pieces that have been sent to the office. It's easy to sign up – just visit thenetnow.listbot.com and you can subscribe from there. Fill in your details (making sure you fill in your email address correctly). You'll be sent an email to confirm your membership of Microsoft's bCentral ListBot service, which we're using to send out the email list. (If you want to know more about ListBot and other sites you can use to create your own mailing list, see our handpicked selection of sites at the bottom of this page.) The only thing left for you to do is wait for *the net*'s new email to appear in your Inbox over the next month...

spot on the front of each issue).

If your newsletter is split into sections, make sure they're always in the same order – it's a good idea to create a template in a programme like Notepad and then work from that. Also, make sure that the subject line of the email is always the same. At the very least, it must have the name of the newsletter. It will make your newsletter stand out from the rest of the hundreds of emails stored in the recipient's inbox. This is very important, since you don't want your newseletter to end up being though of as spam.

So there you have your very own mailing list. Now all you have to do is wait for people to join. It should be relatively straightforward, but many of the sites below provide detailed help in case you get stuck and many of them will even guide you through the setup process.

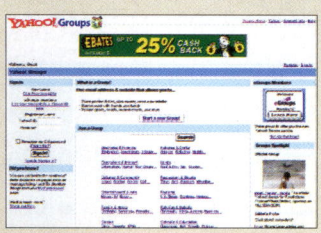
FOUR OF THE BEST MAILING LIST TOOLS



COOLLIST

www.coollist.com

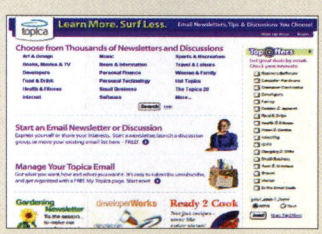
Ideal for beginners: lists are simple to set up and contribute to, and easily searched. There are no frills, and it doesn't encourage you to sign up for lots of other services you don't really want.



YAHOO! GROUPS

groups.yahoo.com

Probably the most feature-packed free service. If you're on a busy list, you can receive a whole day's worth of postings in a single email. You can even opt to have no emails at all, and simply view on the Web.


Learn More. Surf Less.
Choose from Thousands of Newsletters and Discussions
Start an Email Newsletter or Discussion
Manage Your Topica Email

TOPICA

www.topica.com

Topica has email lists on every topic under the sun and it's pretty simple to set one up yourself. You can also set up a 'My Topica' page, so you can change your subscriptions and manage your list from one place.

LISTBOT

www.listbot.com

A good service, though anything more than standard service comes at a price. The ability to see your users' demographics is pretty nifty. Oh, and it's the home of *the net*'s mailing list, too.

PICTURES: CORBIS

Getting online

Surf the Web

SIMPLE, THIS. YOU NEED A computer (commonly a PC running Microsoft Windows, but some people use strange things called Apple Macintoshes), a means of connecting to the Internet (a modem device usually built into the computer, plus an account to dial in to) and a means of seeing the Web pages (that's a browser).

BROWSERS Usually free of charge and pre-installed on new PCs. If not, you can download one from the Internet (use your employer's network; it'll be cheaper and quicker) or from a CD (you'll find them in magazines like this one). Current champion is Microsoft's Internet Explorer (***www.microsoft.com/windows/ie***), but lagging not far behind is Netscape's reliable, adaptable and recently much-improved Navigator (***home.netscape.com/uk/download***). However, there are many 'rebel' browsers either designed for a specific computing platform or boasting strength at a particular function (see below).

NET CONNECTION Most modern PCs come with a built-in modem, a device that will dial your Internet Service Provider (see p106) and connect you to the Internet. Most modems these days run at 56K; OK, but hardly rapid fire. If you want to go quicker, you'll need to look at either 64K/128K ISDN, eg BT's Home Highway, or else 10Mbps ADSL (a permanent, zip-quick connection; for details see ***www.btopenworld.com***). Remember that most ISPs charge for connection, either in the form of a fixed fee (say £9.99 a month) or on a pay-as-you-go basis (say 1p a minute). Consider at what times you surf most and exactly how much before choosing your tariff.

TOP TIP

All change

With Internet Explorer on a PC, the easiest way to alter your favourites is through Windows Explorer. In the Windows directory on your hard drive, double click on Favorites and you can then rename, delete and move them as if they were normal files. Well, of course, they are normal files...

YOUR COMPUTER Virtually every modern PC is quick enough to handle the software required to surf the Internet. Your only choice really is platform: while most plump for PCs running Microsoft Windows, recent years have seen a resurgence in the fortunes of the Apple Mac (mostly thanks to the cutesy iMac). Needless to say, new Internet software is written for PC first, Mac some time after – and the huge and growing online gaming industry is virtually built around PC.

Explorer 5.5: plain grey in PC guise; functional but extremely solid

New Netscape 6.01: colourful and funky, and now said to be more stable

BORED WITH EXPLORER OR NETSCAPE?

BROWSER ALTERNATIVES>>

PC BROWSERS

BROWSER	RATING	FOR	AGAINST	DOWNLOAD FROM
AMAYA	★★☆☆☆	Great for those into Net standards...	...not for those who aren't	*www.w3.org/Amaya/User/BinDist.html*
ARACHNE	★★☆☆☆	It runs in DOS and is written by Czechs	A pain to set up	*arachne.cz*
CUSTOM BROWSER	★☆☆☆☆	Adds minimal extra customisation to IE	It's just IE with an ad in the top panel	*www.custombrowser.com*
HOTJAVA	★★☆☆☆	Pretty showcase for Java technology	Slow, though not as bad as on the Mac	*java.sun.com/products/hotjava/3.0*
INTERNET EXPLORER	★★★★★	For the moment, the king of all browsers	Hard to fault, unless you really try	*www.microsoft.com/windows/ie*
LYNX	★★★★☆	The original text-only browser	If it isn't text, Lynx isn't interested	*lynx.browser.org*
MOSAIC	★★★☆☆	Good for developers	Feels old. Is old. Not updated since 1996	*www.ncsa.uiuc.edu/SDG/Software/mosaic-w*
NEOPLANET	★★★★☆	Funky interface replacement for Explorer	Internet Explorer in new clothes	*www.neoplanet.com*
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR 6	★★★★☆	Wide range of features for hardcore users	Doesn't display pages as prettily as IE	*www.netscape.co.uk*
OPERA	★★★★☆	Faster than IE or Netscape	Bit of a stickler for standards	*www.opera.com*
MSN EXPLORER	★★★★☆	Easy to use, integrates with PIM functions	Right now, it's US-only content	*msn.explorer.com*
MAC BROWSERS				
ICAB	★★★★☆	Fast. Gets rid of irritating ad banners	Could support more features	*www.icab.de*
INTERNET EXPLORER 5.0	★★★★★	State-of-the-art browsing on the Mac	Can be memory-hungry	*www.microsoft.com/Mac/ie*
NETSCAPE NAVIGATOR 6.01	★★★★★	Packed with features; look can be themed	Has .01 update made it less buggy?	*www.netscape.com*
OPERA FOR MAC	★★★★☆	Fast; offers tons of control over page look	Still in 'Technology Preview' guise	*www.opera.com/download/mac*

Send and receive email

EMAIL: THE STUFF THAT HAS THE Royal Mail quivering in its boots (after all, who sends letters any more?). But before you can enjoy the visceral thrills of sending mail instantly through cyberspace (80 percent of email apparently makes it to its recipient within five minutes) you'll need an address and a means of sending and receiving your post.

The former you can get either by signing up with an Internet Service Provider (or ISP, see page 106), getting one from your employer (many firms now have big networks and will afford you a name as part of the job), or through one of the Web-based email service providers (such as Yahoo!, Hotmail, excite, etc). But what are the pros and cons of each option?

WEB-BASED EMAIL Dead handy if you travel a lot; once you have your password after signing up, you can check your mail from any Internet café or any place with an Internet-linked PC.

Some Web-based email service providers even offer the facility to forward and send mail through such desktop software as Microsoft Outlook or Eudora. The catch? Many have a rather clumsy interface, and sending and receiving mail can be slow, especially when America wakes up in the morning and logs on. Make sure you keep a duplicate of your address book and favourites on your hard drive, otherwise if your Web-based account goes down, so do all your contact details. If you fancy checking it out, you can start an account at ***www.yahoo.co.uk***, or head along to either ***www.hotmail.com*** or ***www.excite.co.uk***.

YOUR SERVICE PROVIDER When you sign up with an ISP, you'll be given at least one email address to use, and most will even provide the email software you need to get started (which is usually Outlook, although do remember that you're rarely stuck with it; you can choose any from between the leading packages outlined in the column to the right).

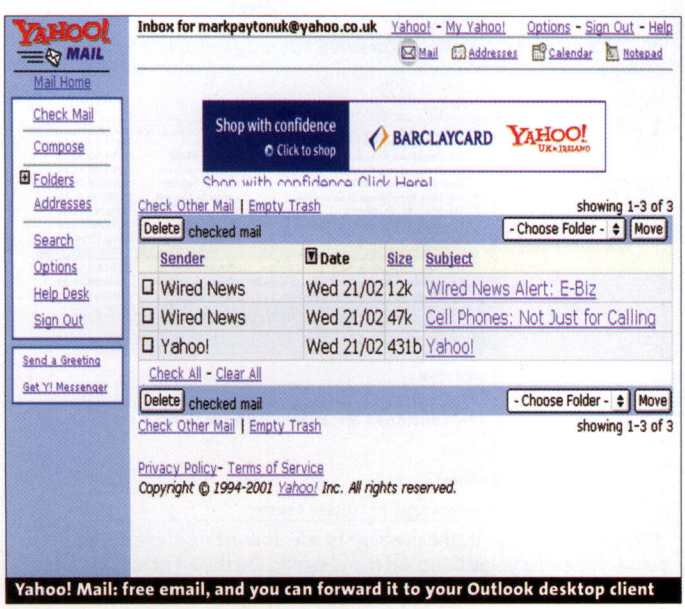
The catch? You may find it difficult to read email from these accounts at your workplace, unless you can be bothered to manually forward mail to yourself for the next day, which could prove a tiring process.

YOUR EMPLOYER This usually means using whatever software your employer provides (which is invariably the networked version of Outlook), and you can't access your email from home using your own PC (unless your bosses love you enough to set you up there as well). The upside? It's all free of charge.

TOP TIP

Check it offline

You can check Web-based email accounts such as Hotmail through newer versions of Outlook and Outlook Express. On a PC, click on Accounts in the Tools menu (it's called Services on a Mac) and add a new http or 'Web' email account. Then every time your computer checks for your normal email, it will also retrieve your Web-based messages, too.

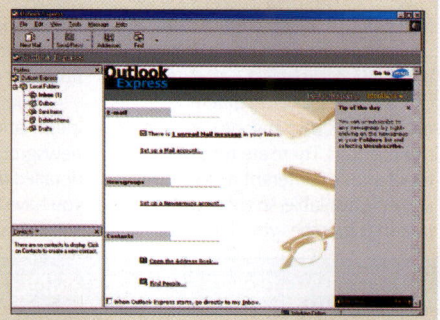


Yahoo! Mail: free email, and you can forward it to your Outlook desktop client

ARE THE RIGHT PEOPLE HANDLING YOUR POST?

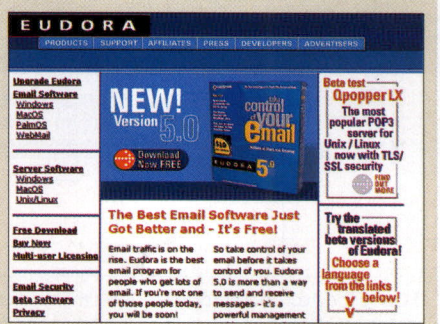
EMAIL CLIENTS>>

Microsoft Outlook Express 5 ★★★★☆



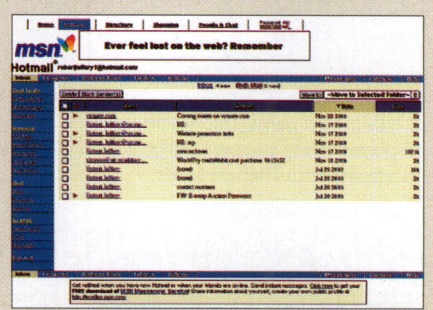
If your PC came with IE5+, you're most likely already using Express 5. And that's a good thing: the latest Outlook is easy to use and set up, and now features such useful extras as Hotmail support (you can download your Hotmail messages for working offline, or synch your Hotmail and Express address books). And with so many families now having individual email addresses, Outlook makes setting up individual accounts fuss free. Available for both PC and Mac, the download is at ***www.microsoft.com/windows/oe***.

Eudora 5.0 ★★★★★


EUDORA
PRODUCTS SUPPORT AFFILIATES PRESS DEVELOPERS ADVERTISERS
NEW! Version 5.0
Download Now FREE
The Best Email Software Just Got Better and - It's Free!

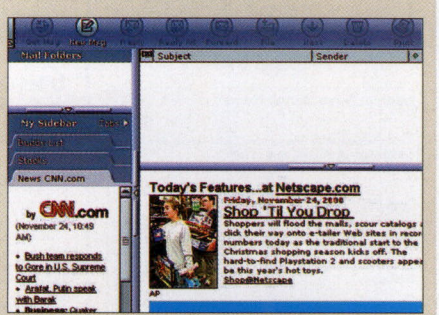
Launched back in September, the latest Eudora is available in Paid ($49.95), Sponsored and Light modes. Both of the latter can be grabbed free from ***www.eudora.com***. While Light is stripped down, Sponsored features advertising. Either way, the Eudora package is excellent; the interface is attractive and intuitive, while the package integrates well with the address book. 5.0 even includes a novel 'MoodWatcher' – a feature that affords mail a 'red chilli pepper' rating according to the strength of its 'inflammatory' language.

MSN Hotmail ★★★★☆



The web-based service that got the whole ball rolling. Sign up for a free account, and get an email address and a password. There's a 2Mb limit on your inbox, and an Inbox Protector to fight off spam mail. The Hotmail Alert service will notify your pager or mobile telephone of incoming messages. Sign up at ***www.hotmail.com***, or try either ***www.yahoo.co.uk*** or ***www.excite.co.uk*** instead; the services are all pretty similar.

Netscape Mail ★★★★☆



Now bundled in with the new Netscape 6 browser, Mail runs Outlook Express neck-and-neck; as with the Microsoft product, there's full integration with its built-in address book. True to the philosophy of the 6 browser, the themed Mail interface tries to pack in as much 'user friendliness' as possible. The 'My Sidebar' feature, for example, is carried over from the browser. Don't forget to go grab the latest, de-bugged update to 6 (6.01) from ***www.netscape.com***.

Newsgroups

Whatever topic tickles your fancy, there'll be a newsgroup dedicated to it on the Net. Here's how to join up

Newsgroups are one of the older services on the Internet. Each group is like a bulletin board – anyone can post messages to different newsgroups, and anyone can read the postings. There are tens of thousands of different newsgroup subjects available, so there will be one that matches your interests, whether you're looking for info on beekeeping or book-keeping, computers or comics, sewing or sailing.

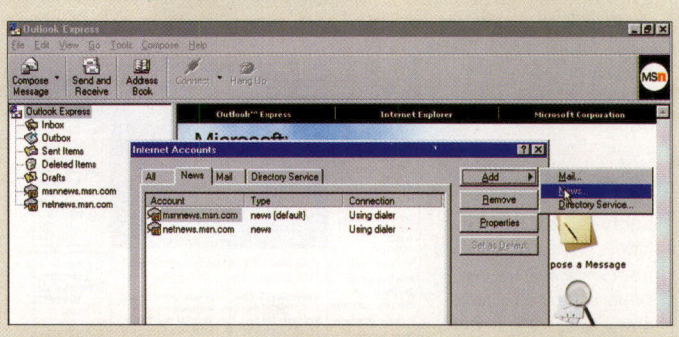
Although the Web has plenty of information on most subjects, newsgroups will often provide more detailed answers to questions. If you have a question on a specific subject, you can receive half a dozen responses in two hours. The most famous newsgroup system is Usenet. This is structured like a tree, with a few large branches and thousands of smaller ones. The large branches are top-level discussion categories, such as rec (recreation), which contain smaller branches, such as rec.art. These categories contain messages themselves but are also broken down further into even more specific branches, such as rec.arts.comics, which contain messages from people who are interested in that topic.

If you don't want to go to the bother of configuring Outlook Express or other newsgroup access software, visit DejaNews ***www.deja.com*** – a Web-based interface to newsgroups. You can read and send messages from here, all via your Web browser. Simple.

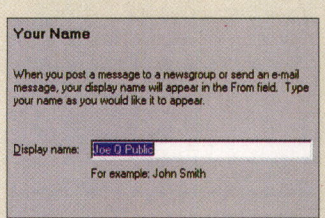
Your ISP will provide you with its own news server access, or visit ***esalesbiz.com/web/nntplst.htm*** which links to hundreds of free access news servers. To add more servers to Outlook Express, go through the setting-up steps outlined below.

ACCESSING NEWSGROUPS USING OUTLOOK EXPRESS

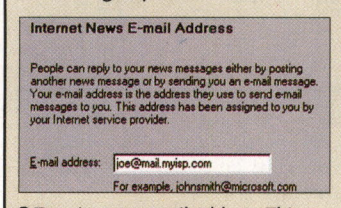
STEP BY STEP>>



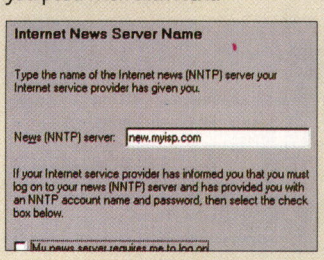
1 Go to the Accounts entry in the Tools menu, click on the News tab to list your current news accounts (if any), hit Add and choose News.


Your Name
When you post a message to a newsgroup or send an e-mail message, your display name will appear in the From field. Type your name as you would like it to appear.
Display name:
Joe O Public
For example: John Smith

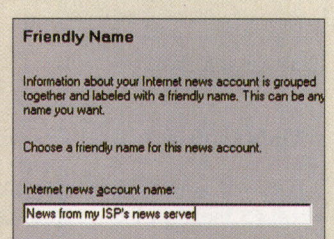
2 Type in your name. This will be displayed in any message you post to a newsgroup. Then hit Next.


Internet News E-mail Address
People can reply to your news messages either by posting another news message or by sending you an e-mail message. Your e-mail address is the address they use to send e-mail messages to you. This address has been assigned to you by your Internet service provider.
E-mail address:
joe@mail.myisp.com
For example, johnsmith@microsoft.com

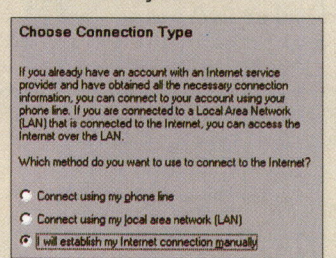
3 Type in your email address. This will be displayed in any message you post. Then click Next.


Internet News Server Name
Type the name of the Internet news (NNTP) server your Internet service provider has given you.
News (NNTP) server:
new.myisp.com
If your Internet service provider has informed you that you must log on to your news (NNTP) server and has provided you with an NNTP account name and password, then select the check box below.

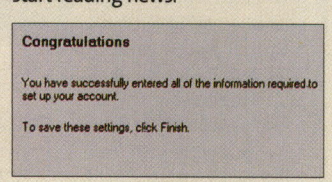
4 Enter the name of your ISP's server, which should be given in your user documentation.


Friendly Name
Information about your Internet news account is grouped together and labeled with a friendly name. This can be any name you want.
Choose a friendly name for this news account.
Internet news account name:
News from my ISP's news server

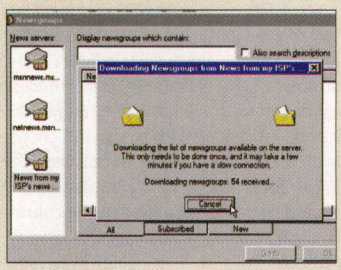
5 Give the news server a name that makes sense to you.


Choose Connection Type
If you already have an account with an Internet service provider and have obtained all the necessary connection information, you can connect to your account using your phone line. If you are connected to a Local Area Network (LAN) that is connected to the Internet, you can access the Internet over the LAN.
Which method do you want to use to connect to the Internet?
Connect using my phone line
Connect using my local area network (LAN)
I will establish my Internet connection manually

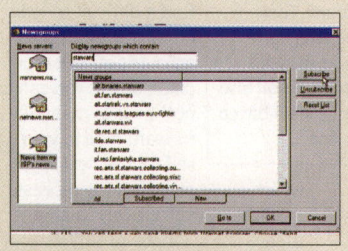
6 Tell Outlook Express that you will dial your ISP manually before you start reading news.


Congratulations
You have successfully entered all of the information required to set up your account.
To save these settings, click Finish.

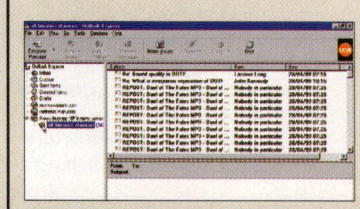
7 And you're done! You have now set up a newsgroup access account. Now let's see how to use it.


Downloading Newsgroups from News from my ISP's ...
Downloading the list of newsgroups available on the server. This only needs to be done once, and it may take a few minutes if you have a slow connection.
Downloading newsgroups: 54 received...
Cancel
All
Subscribed
New

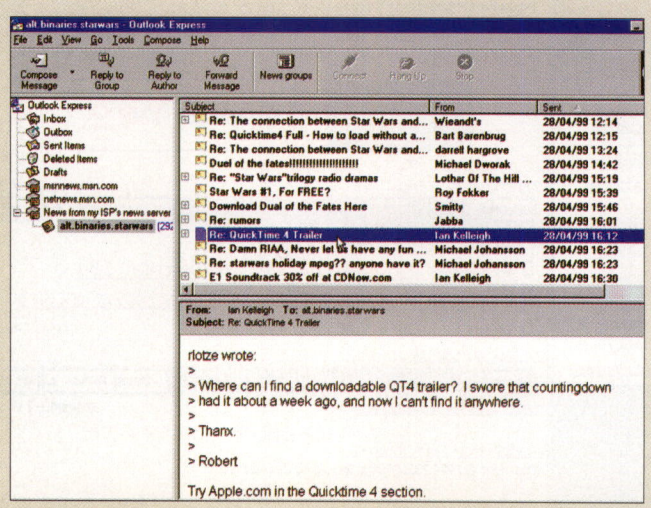
8 After hitting Close, you're asked if you want to download your ISP's list of newsgroups. When you click Yes, the list will be downloaded, so make sure you're online. This can take up to 10 minutes when you first connect, because you are downloading the names of thousands of newsgroups.



9 Once all the newsgroups are downloaded, you can explore. If you want to find *Star Wars* postings, for example, type 'starwars' into the text field at the top of the window to display all newsgroups containing that word. You can subscribe to as many groups as you want.



10 To access a message inside a newsgroup, click on the subject header to read a summary. Double click the header and the whole message downloads, appearing on the lower half of the screen.


alt.binaries.starwars - Outlook Express
Compose Message
Reply to Group
Reply to Author
Forward Message
News groups
Outlook Express
Inbox
Outbox
Sent Items
Deleted Items
Drafts
mannews.msn.com
netnews.msn.com
News from my ISP's news server
alt.binaries.starwars
Subject
From
Sent
Re: The connection between Star Wars and... Wieandt's 28/04/99 12:14
Re: Quicktime4 Full - How to load without a... Bart Barenbrug 28/04/99 12:15
Re: The connection between Star Wars and... darrell hargrove 28/04/99 13:24
Duel of the fates!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! Michael Dworak 28/04/99 14:42
Re: "Star Wars"trilogy radio dramas Lothar Of The Hill ... 28/04/99 15:19
Star Wars 81, For FREE? Roy Fokker 28/04/99 15:39
Download Dual of the Fates Here Smitty 28/04/99 15:46
Re: rumors Jabba 28/04/99 16:01
Re: QuickTime 4 Trailer Ian Kelleigh 28/04/99 16:12
Re: Damn RIAA, Never let us have any fun ... Michael Johansson 28/04/99 16:23
Re: starwars holiday mpeg?? anyone have it? Michael Johansson 28/04/99 16:23
E1 Soundtrack 30% off at CDNow.com Ian Kelleigh 28/04/99 16:30
From: Ian Kelleigh To: alt.binaries.starwars
Subject: Re: QuickTime 4 Trailer
rlotze wrote:
> Where can I find a downloadable QT4 trailer? I swore that countingdown had it about a week ago, and now I can't find it anywhere.
> Thanx.
> Robert
Try Apple.com in the Quicktime 4 section.

11 If there is a '+' sign by the message header this means there are replies which you can also read. Click on the '+' sign to see the list of replies.

Online chat

How to hold virtual conversations with friends and strangers, experts and celebrities

Online chat lets you communicate with other people, often in real time. In other words, you type in comments, send them over the Net and they're seen almost immediately. And you're only paying for a local phone call, even if you are 'talking' to someone on the other side of the world.

You can 'chat' with friends and relatives in other countries without running up massive phone bills. Or join in an online discussion on your favourite subject with an expert.

There's the opportunity to ask a celebrity questions during a moderated 'conference', or talk to complete strangers on the other side of the world.

'Smileys' are a way of including an indication of emotion in your messages. They are useful when, for example, you are making a joke and you want to be sure that the recipient realises you're not being serious. Hang a relevant smiley on the end of your sentence by typing in the relevant characters, but do try not to over-use them. To 'read' them, just turn the page 90 degrees to the right ;-) Got it? Here are the four most used smileys:

- :-) The original smiley. Indicates a joke, or just a happy person!
- ;-) Wink
- :-o Shock (an open mouth)
- :-(Unhappy

Don't register your details with a site unless you really want to. Often chat software will ask for your name and other info. Be wary; you don't know what it'll be used for.

If you are looking for romance online, use caution. Don't reveal your home address and if you decide to meet up, make sure someone knows where you're going, as you would if meeting someone from a magazine or newspaper ad.

If text chat seems a bit flat, try 3D chat, where users take on a 'persona' and actually walk round chat rooms. Try ***www.virtualzones.com*** for starters.

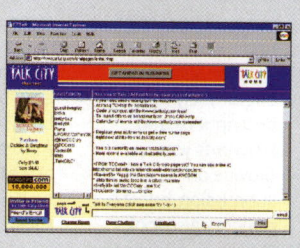
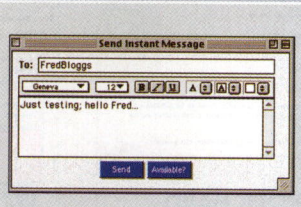
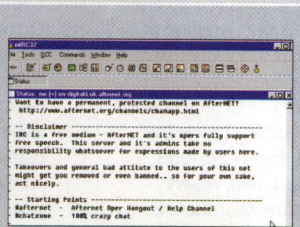
TOP TIP

Jabber mate

Jabber, available from *www.jabber.com*, is an Instant Messenger with a difference – you can access and send messages to ICQ, Yahoo! and MSN-based contacts, all at the same time. If your friends use all manner of Instant Messaging programmes, then this is the application for you.

THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY TO SPEAK TO THE WORLD...

CHAT CHOICES>>

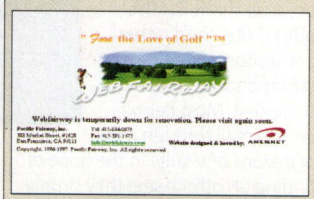
TYPE OF CHAT		FOR & AGAINST	CHAT LINK
LIVE ON A WEB SITE Takes place within the window of your browser on a Web site. Messages come up instantly and can be seen by everyone who is viewing that Web page.		**FOR** Easy to use; no extra software required to run it. **AGAINST** Works on someone's Web site, so the subject will be dictated by them and private chat is unlikely.	***www.talkcity.com*** Online community where you can talk on various subjects, including romance and current affairs.
MODERATED SESSIONS Moderated chats are 'supervised' by a chat room host, who decides whether or not to allow your comments or questions to be displayed. This is the norm for celebrity chats.		**FOR** Discussions are sensibly run. Abusive or annoying people may be screened out. **AGAINST** Only take place at certain times because they require a moderator to be present on the site. Censorship is an issue.	***www.chat.beeb.com*** The BBC's celebrity chat service with daily visits from the network's top stars.
REAL-TIME USING EXTRA SOFTWARE Software like AOL's Instant Messenger and ICQ allow you to chat in real time. You don't use a Web browser; the software takes care of everything.		**FOR** Instant response; ability to chat privately to one person. **AGAINST** Requires extra software. Some firms don't allow this to be installed on their PCs, so you may not be able to chat at work.	***www.aol.co.uk/aim*** ***www.icq.com*** Chat one-to-one with your friends in real time on the Net.
IRC IRC (Internet Relay Chat) software lets you talk to many people at once. It can be a pain to use, however; it was, after all, modelled on CB radio.		**FOR** Useful, technical chats are often held on IRC channels. **AGAINST** Software is difficult to use; IRC users can be impatient with newcomers.	***www.mirc.com*** Although it can be tricky to get used to, mIRC is the best software for IRC chat. ***www.ircle.com*** IRC client for Macs.

THIS MONTH'S HAPPENING SITES

Explore some of the subjects featured in this month's *the net*...

Mad about **cars?** Discuss your passion at The Auto Channel (***www.theautochannel.com***).

Looking for **technical help?** There's plenty on the busy forms at ***www.zdnet.com***



Join in the **golf** discussions on the Web Fairway site (***www.webfairway.com/chat.htm***)

Share your **photography** skills with other keen amateurs at ***www.fotoforum.com***.

Meet members of other **religions** on the excellent Beliefnet (***www.beliefnet.com***).

Get help from fellow **backpackers** before you set off at ***www.4-lane.com/sportschat/newsc/bp_index.html***

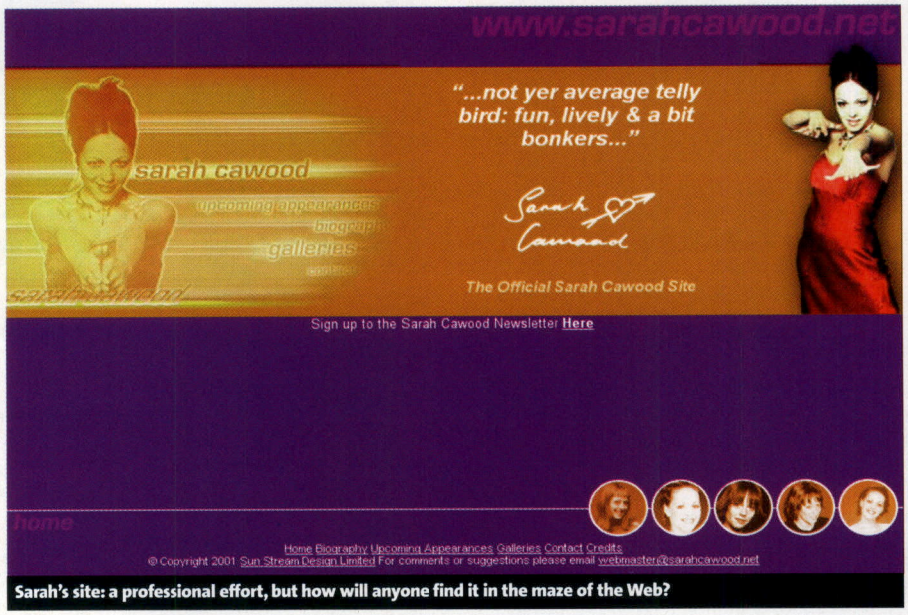
Search for Sarah

In the final part of our Web design series, we look at how to drive visitors to your finished masterpiece

AS THE SITE WE BUILT FOR TV presenter Sarah Cawood is now properly up and running, the site's developers, Sunstream, need to make sure users can find it in the vast world that is the Internet.

They will need to register the site with various search engines so that if people are searching for 'Sarah Cawood', the site address (***www.sarahcawood.net***) will appear straight away in the list of results. It is important for the site's designers to get it right – because this is Sarah's official site, she'd rather any visitors looking for information on her went there first. Most people won't trawl through a list of dozens of results in the hope of finding an official site: they simply click on the first decent-looking site (or indeed URL) they come across.

Getting a good listing in a search engine is also important for visitor numbers – if it has a poor listing then the site isn't likely to attract many visitors, which can have a negative impact if you later decide to use it to generate revenue, not to mention the sheer frustration of seeing your hard work ignored.


www.sarahcawood.net
"...not yer average telly bird: fun, lively & a bit bonkers..."
sarah cawood
upcoming appearances
biography
galleries
The Official Sarah Cawood Site
Sign up to the Sarah Cawood Newsletter Here
home
Home Biography Upcoming Appearances Galleries Contact Credits
© Copyright 2001 Sun Stream Design Limited For comments or suggestions please email webmaster@sarahcawood.net
Sarah's site: a professional effort, but how will anyone find it in the maze of the Web?

WORDS MATTER

Many search directories such as Yahoo! (***uk.yahoo.com***) put your site into a category, but how do they decide which? Other search engines don't categorise sites at all. If someone searches the various categories for 'Sarah Cawood', on the most popular directory on the Net, how can they be sure of finding our site first?

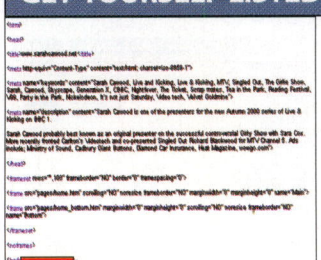
Meta tags are the most important part of a site

Some search engines rely on descriptions and keywords you provide on submission, but the majority also look within the HTML files of your site for a description and some keywords. These are contained between what are known as 'meta tags'. A tag in an HTML document is a command, surrounded by '**<**' and '**>**'. When you have two tags in HTML the second tag (the one containing the '**/**' character before the command) has the effect of switching off the first. So, in the case of making something bold, you surround the text you wish to embolden with **** and ****. A full list of HTML tags, their definitions and other tips can be found in the archives at the excellent ***www.htmlhelp.com***.

To see examples of meta tags in action, we're going to look at the HTML code which goes to make up the front page of Sarah's Web site.

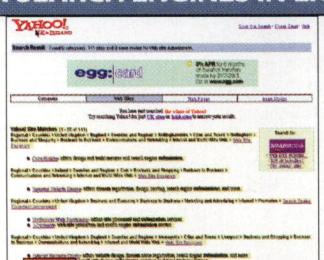
To look at this code – often referred to as the source code – click on 'Source' (usually contained within the View menu; it might even say 'View Source' in some browsers). You'll see the HTML that makes up the page – before you attempt any sort of site design, it's well worth browsing the code of sites you like to pick up tips and ideas for your own effort. For instance, the top of the source code in Sarah's site will contain some of the following:

GET YOURSELF LISTED IN SEARCH ENGINES IN EIGHT EASY STEPS



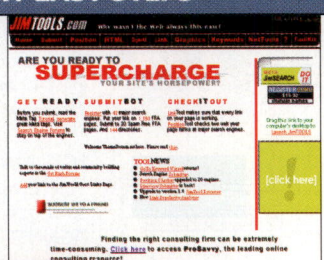
1 META TAG IT

Meta tags are everything when you start to submit your site to search engines. Without them, your submissions will be fruitless. For more information on meta tags and how to best prepare your site for submission, take lots of notes at ***searchenginewatch.com/webmasters/meta.html***



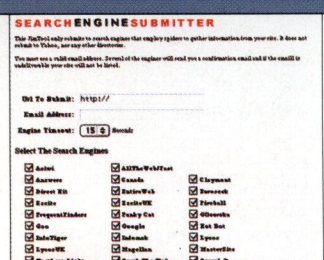
2 WHO TO SUBMIT TO?

This isn't as easy as it sounds – there are thousands of search engines across the Net. Some, like Yahoo!, put your site in a category, while others such as Google will heavily depend on meta tags to allow it to find the correct results. Some search engines will even specialise in a particular subject area.



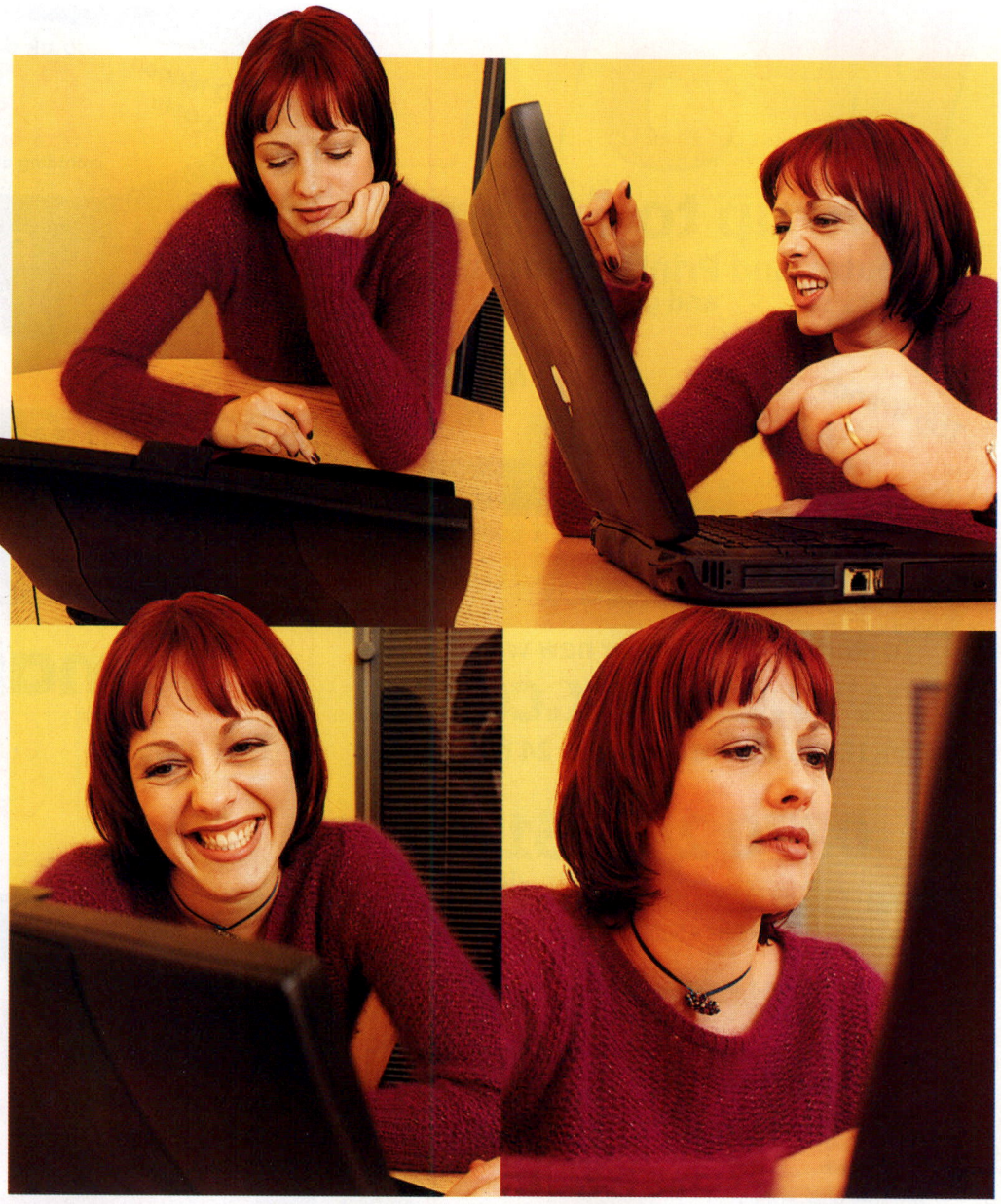
3 DON'T WORK HARD

You could submit your site to each search engine one by one – each has its own method of submission. But because there are so many, the best option is to use a Web site to do the work for us. We're going to use the submission engine JimTools (***www.jimtools.com***), widely regarded as the best there is.



4 JIM'LL FIX IT

JimTools' Search Engine SubmitBot will submit your site to the 46 biggest engines. JimTools also has a directory submitter to place your site in over 140 Web directories. The directories will then choose a category (depending on your meta tags) in which to place your Web site.



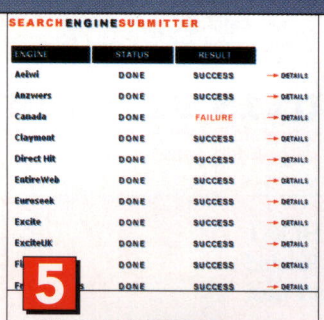
```
<html>
<head>
<title>www.sarah
cawood.net</title>
<meta name="keywords" content=
"Sarah Cawood, Live and Kicking,
Live & Kicking, MTV, Singled Out">
<meta name="description" content=
"Sarah Cawood is one of the
presenters for the new Autumn
2000 series of Live & Kicking">
</head>
```

DECIPHERING THE CODE

So what's all that mean? The **<html>** simply tells your browser what language it is using, the **<head>** and **</head>** tags simply signpost the top of the document. The **<title>** and **</title>** tags can contain any text that you want the user's browser to show in the window's title bar. The rest of the main body of the document will be between **<body>** and **</body>**.

However, it's the meta tags we are concerned with here. In simple terms, the **meta name="keywords"** tag contains a list of words that could be used as search terms when someone is looking for Sarah's site, such as 'MTV'. Likewise, the **meta name="description"** tag contains a few sentences connected with Sarah and her work.

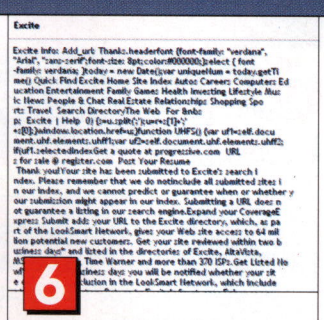
By reading the contents of those tags, a search engine will decide where to put your site and what terms can be used to search for it, making the meta tags possibly the single most important ingredient in building a successful site. Take time and care in choosing the terms you use and you'll find the visitors come flocking to you...



5

FILL IN THE FORM

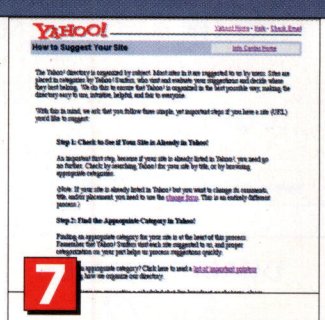
Make sure you enter a valid email address, as the various search engines you submit to will send you confirmation of your submission. It might be an idea to set up a new Web-based email account to use to avoid junk mail. Then click submit and the site will be processed right before your eyes.



6

IT WILL TAKE TIME

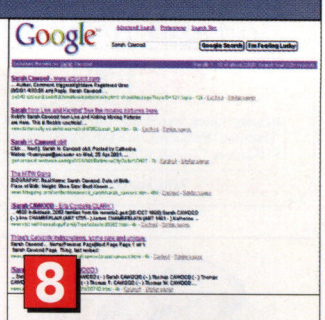
After JimTools has finished, you'll be able to see a summary of the results. Your submissions won't be processed overnight. Unusually for anything Internet-related, you might even have to wait a few weeks. This is especially the case with bigger search engines who often look at submissions in detail.



7

YAHOO! IS DIFFERENT

No JimTools submission process includes submitting your site to Yahoo! This is because Yahoo! is a different (and more difficult) beast than most of the search engines. Submissions are looked at by hand, and you must submit to it individually. For more info on how to submit, see ***docs.yahoo.com/info/suggest***.



8

KEEP ON SUBMITTING

It's important to periodically re-submit your site to some search engines. If your site is already listed in a search engine, it's not worth re-submitting it, especially if it's one of the big boys, as they won't take a second glance unless something has changed. So it might be worth re-writing your meta tags.

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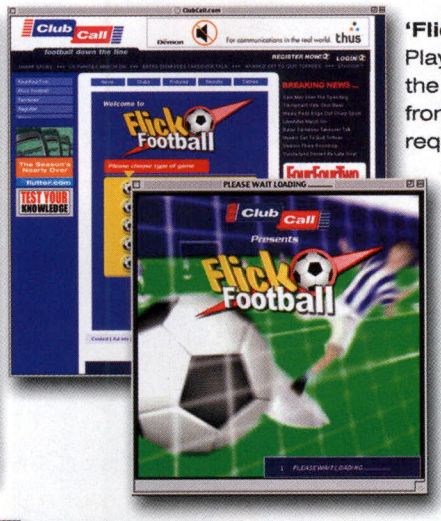

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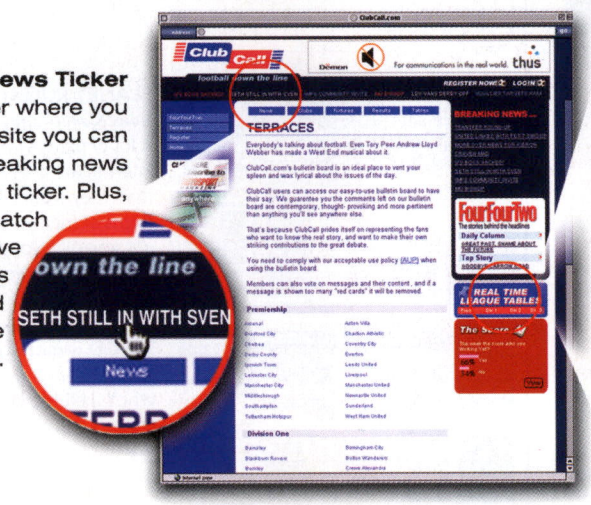

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8. Charlton 7 0 7 0 0 7
9. Coventry 7 0 7 0 0 7
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12.Spurs 7 0 7 0 0 7
13.West Ham 7 0 7 0 0 7
14.Leicester 6 1 4 1 -1 7
15.Derby 8 0 7 1 -1 7
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:// Famous fans of the Web tell all

INTERVIEW: GARY PARKINSON; PICTURE: PA

Martin Johnson

The British & Irish Lions captain packs his free laptop for this summer's tour to Australia

How did England players react when coach Clive Woodward arranged for everyone to have a laptop?
They were quite excited, but to be fair they always like free stash. There was a range of computer experience but now they're all emailing each other. I already had a home PC but it was taking me too long to get into stuff so I got a bit bored – I haven't got a very long attention span. But once I got on the laptop I got into it.

What do you use the Internet for?
I've been using the HSBC site. It's fantastic to do all your banking from home. The Robbie Coltrane Barclays advert was a bit cheesy but it's true: if you can go in at any time of day or night to transfer money or pay a bill it's very convenient.

Would you set up your own site?
I've had enquiries but I've never had the time. If you do something like that you've got to really do it well, so I've stuck to writing for Planet Rugby.

What would constitute a good Web site for a rugby player?
You have to keep it current so people come back. You could have advice for youngsters, insight into the game, links for kit... I've got loads of ideas here, I'll have to write these down!

Will you be emailing home from Australia while you're on tour?
Oh yeah. I probably receive more than I send, I'm a bit too lazy to reply to emails. But when you've got ex-teammates and coaches who are in Australia or Canada it's the best way to get hold of them.

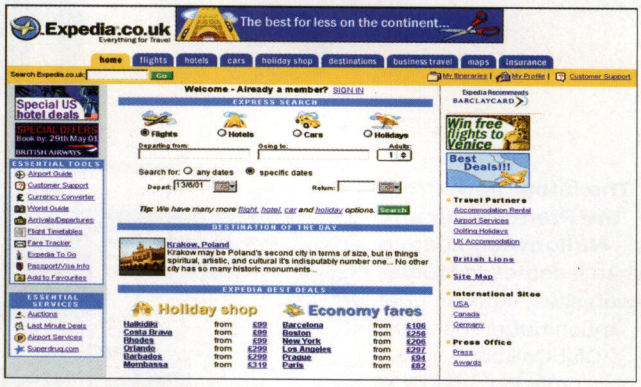
How do you rate Net rugby coverage?
I'm involved with rugby all the time so I don't really go and search it out on the Net, but it's pretty good. The good thing about the Internet is that there's a lot of information and opinion if you do want to find things out.

Does Clive Woodward still email team selections?
He only did that during the World Cup when we weren't all in camp together. It's more like team circulars and you get a hard copy through the post, but it's a better way of communicating than making 30 phone calls.

You've had photos doctored to make you look like a lion...
They weren't doctored, mate, that's what I look like!

...but if you saw your head grafted on to a picture of a naked male model on a site, would you sue?
Depends what the body looked like. If it's better than mine I'd be happy!

MARTIN'S PICK OF THE WEB



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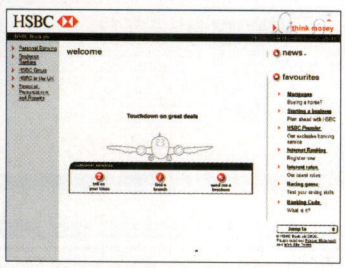
The Lions' official travel Web site: over 2000 fans booked for the tour here.



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TESCO ***www.tesco.com***
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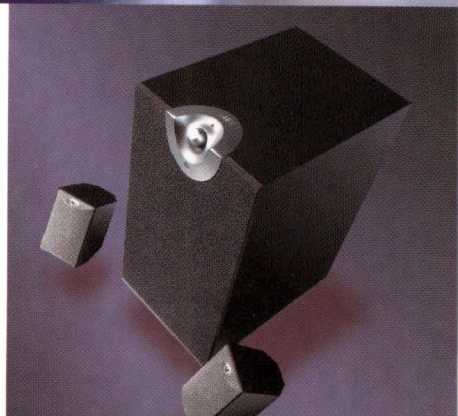

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